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THE

WAY OF PEACE.

BY

HENRY A. ROWLAND,

AUTHOR OF A WORK "ON THE COMMON MAXIMS OF INFIDELITY," "THE PATH OF LIFE," AND "LIGHT IN A DARK ALLEY."

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee."
ISAIAH, XXVI. 3.

17

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TO

MRS. JANE,

WIDOW OF THE LATE

ISSAC HEYER,

OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK,

WHOSE RICH EXPERIENCE OF DIVINE GRACE GIVES ITS FULL ATTESTATION TO THE EXCELLENCE OF THAT RELIGION

WHOSE FRUIT IS PEACE,

THIS VOLUME

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

PREFATORY.

This work is designed for those who long for peace, and hope that they have found it, and have begun to walk in its pleasant way. "The Path of Life" is designed to direct the wandering and lost to Christ; "The Way of Peace," to enable one who thinks that he has found acceptance with the Saviour, to satisfy himself on this point, by means of suitable evidence; and also to show how he may preserve his religious affections in their purity and strength, and continue ever to live in peace with God, and in the enjoyment of his love. Many of the works designed for the use of Christians, in this day, are not sufficiently experimental and practical, to prove the most satisfactory. There is a superficial style of writing which is much in vogue. The press groans under a vast amount of light reading on religious subjects, whose tendency is to please, but not to induce the most rigid inquiry into the proper grounds of religious hope. And yet there never was a time when there was more need that spiritual religion, in its fulness and power, should be set in array against formalism.

It is a common opinion that a book, to be made attractive, must be embellished. This occasions a straining after effect which is so apparent as to become distasteful to a cultivated mind. A single grain of wheat is often contained in a bushel of chaff. Illustrations, rather than the thing illustrated, are invested with such prominence as to command the chief attention. It seems to be forgotten that truth, if set forth in its simplicity and beauty, will shine through its own native lustre; and that, if properly set, it will sparkle like a diamond of the first water, and become attractive to all who love God. And yet, as Archbishop Leighton remarks, "it requires much learning to make these things plain." But learning cannot be more usefully employed than in explaining and enforcing religious truth. In doing it, language and the arrangements of thought should assume the utmost simplicity. Light should stream from an author's pen. Truth, divested of its obscurities, should be as lucid as a sunbeam. It should make its own impression. It needs no illumination, but will shine of itself. It is with these views that I have written. Not that I feel myself competent to reach the standard here set up, but I have striven to do so. The direction of my aim is good, even if my hand is too unsteady to hit the mark.

I wrote, because this seemed to be a neglected field. It was not out of ambition to become an author, but to do good. There were thoughts within which would not be repressed, but clamored for egress at the door till they

pressed it open, and rushed forth into the world. I hope that I have been enabled to clothe them decently, so that I may reputably acknowledge their paternity; though it has cost me much labor, and severe toil. But the labor has been pleasant, and the toil, like the yoke of Christ, easy to be borne.

Kind words have encouraged me, and testimonies from distant strangers that some, whom I shall never behold in the flesh, have found Christ through the instrumentality of my pen. And if God shall thus be glorified, and mercy triumphant, it is enough. It affords me greater joy, than would a mine of gold. There is no pleasure equal to that which springs from the consciousness of being useful, and of being permitted to guide wandering and lost men into the way of peace.

Honesdale, Pa., April 6, 1853.

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THE

WAY OF PEACE.

Chapter First.

TO THOSE WHO LONG FOR PEACE.

As I glance my eye around, I discover amid the crowd many who are solicitous for enduring peace. Troubled in their minds, they are anxious to attain tranquillity. The world cannot give them the repose they seek. In the enjoyment of its good, there is still a longing after pleasures more substantial. In view of what they know of themselves, and of what the sacred Scriptures teach, they are disquieted. With no assurance of future blessedness, and conscious of no relief from the burden of sin, they are oppressed with gloomy forebodings, and are restless even when the world esteems them happy. They long for peace.

This solicitude varies with the changing scenes around them. They who feel a longing for peace to-day, may to-morrow be thoughtless.

The cool and determined neglecter of religion was once disturbed by troubled thoughts. He was convicted, but succeeded in allaying his convictions. He felt an earnest desire for peace, but it presently gave place to unconcern. Reflection is thus succeeded by thoughtlessness; and thoughtlessness in its turn gives place to reflection. This variableness of feeling is natural to the impenitent mind.

Intermingled with the worldly and thoughtless, are some who are comforted with the hope that they are Christians. In every place where the Gospel has produced its legitimate impressions on the heart, there are those who indulge this hope. To them especially are the instructions of this work addressed. It is my aim to set forth those evidences of true religion which may discover to them the nature of their religious experience; and to unfold those counsels which may guide them into the way of peace, and show them how to maintain a life of blessedness to its close.

You think that you know what it is to love the Saviour, and flatter yourself that your hope of heaven is genuine. Need I tell you, that many who think the same of their hope, are deceived? They trust in a delusive and groundless expectation of future blessedness. They have built their house, but it is upon the sand.

Some imagine that they have become Christians, by baptism; that they then became children of God, and that all that is now needed to perfect in them this religion, is to continue within the pale of the Church, and in the reception of its ordinances. In these outward means of grace they trust; and they feel a kind of peace. But it is a false security. It is such as Paul felt while he trusted in his observance of the Jewish ritual. He felt peaceful in his error, and thought himself secure of heaven. But when the commandment came, and was applied to his conscience in its spirituality and power, his peace fled, nor could he rest till he received Christ as his Saviour, and found mercy at his feet. Never till, through faith in the Redeemer, he felt his sins forgiven, did he obtain peace.

Nothing is more fatal to the burdened sinner than to depend upon his own righteousness, or upon his formal observance of religious duties; for nothing does so effectually turn away the soul from Christ, and prevent its application to him for pardon. And this error infects many who think themselves Christians. It is necessary carefully to guard against its deceptive influence. Unless you properly discriminate the true nature of Christian hope, you may be deceived. It is important for you to know what are the evidences of real piety on which you

may safely rely, and that you have come to Christ by faith, and begun to walk in the way of peace, before those counsels designed to show how you may preserve your soul in the love of God, and in the blessedness of religion, can have any application to your case.

But though you may not confide in your own righteousness as the ground of acceptance with God, yet there are other errors, to which you are liable, which are equally fatal. Your hope of having experienced that moral renovation which our Saviour compares to a new birth, may be groundless. Your view of doctrine may be correct; but, in applying the tests of conversion to develop the nature of your religious experience, you may so misapprehend them, or so improperly apply them, as to fail of a correct result. There is a constant liableness to self-deception which ought never to be forgotten.

Many mistake their own characters, through wrong views of the nature of conversion. They may think that it consists only in making up one's mind to be a Christian, determining to lead a different life; or in a public profession of religion; or in baptism; and thus rest upon an error which will prove fatal to their hope of acceptance with God. Instances of self-deception arising from these sources are constantly occur-

ring. The world is full of them. There are imminent dangers to which those who would pursue the path to heaven are exposed, and it requires the greatest care to avoid them.

With these dangers full in view, I ask you carefully to inquire, whether the peace you feel proceeds from a well-grounded hope in Jesus Christ, or from some false and unscriptural assumption. You long for peace; but in striving to gain it, you are liable to mistake that which is false, for the genuine. You may think yourself advancing to the happy termination of life, when you have no substantial ground for this opinion. Instead of pressing on in the way of peace, you may have never yet entered it; and the peace you feel may be delusive. It may resemble that which the Psalmist describes when he says, "There are no bands in their death, neither are they in trouble as other men are." There is a false, as there is a true hope. There is a love of God which is merely selfish, and is consistent with a proud and unsubdued heart. There is an obedience which is formal only. There are unfaithful, as there are faithful servants; foolish virgins, as there are wise; and fields yielding both tares and wheat. There are those who shall knock, but never gain admittance to the palace of the Great King. There are those who will continue to feel peaceful,

hoping for admission there, up to the fatal moment when they shall receive the sentence, "Depart from me, I never knew you."

Should your peace prove thus groundless, what pen can portray the bitter anguish which will ensue? You hope, in the bright world above, to mingle with the pious friends who have gone before you, and often think of the blessedness of that interview; but this object of hope may never be realized. Your hope may be one which is destitute of foundation, and whose only tendency is delusive. Such hopes there are; and they will perish when God shall take away the soul.

But there is one, very different in its nature, which cannot deceive you, but "is as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast." This hope is set before you in the Gospel; and there is opportunity to gain it. The self-deceived even may now discover their delusion, and repair their error. No language can express the peace and joy of the soul when this hope takes possession of it Disquietude gives place to calm repose. The storm within ceases to rage, and the turbulent waves of passion and discontent die along the shore. He who was once oppressed with terrible fears, has found peace. He begins to walk with God. And every step taken in this way, every conflict and victory, every temptation

and triumph, do but occasion a renewed hope of overcoming the world, and of reaching at length the happy termination of his journey.

The way of peace! Blessed way! way that the saints have trodden till they reached their home! The way of peace! Never can sinful man be happy till he finds i . This is the way in which you desire to walk. I purpose to set it before you; and to show how you may ever continue in the enjoyment of peace, till you pass by death away from this vale of tears, and enter, through the beauty of holiness, into the everlasting rest.

Chapter Second.

THE NATURE OF TRUE PEACE.

PEACE is a state of quiet, or tranquillity. There is peace in the elements when the storm has ceased. There is peace between foes when terms of agreement and friendly intercourse have been negotiated, and the conflict is terminated. There is peace in the disturbed mind when its disquietude is at an end. But Christian peace includes more than mere freedom from disquiet. It implies the renewal of friendly relations to God, and a calm delight in him. When one, who has felt the painful apprehensions which sin occasions, becomes sensible of pardon, his soul is no longer disturbed. All his disquietude is at an end; and, in the assurance of the divine friendship, he feels a sweet and heavenly peace.

The foundation of peace is innocence. A sinless being is naturally free from apprehension, and his peaceful relations with God are never disturbed. Our first parents in Eden were thus sinless, and while in a state of inno-

cence, they had peace. So also was Jesus Christ. Conscious of no sin, his bosom was ever the abode of perfect peace. He was not only free from disquieting apprehensions, but had a calm and constant delight in God. This peace was natural to him as a sinless being; and it is to this that he refers, when he calls it his own. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you."

But the peace which our Saviour felt, and that of his disciples, though alike in their effect upon the mind, were dissimilar in their origin. Our Saviour's peace naturally flowed from his innocence; that of his disciples sprung from the consciousness of pardon. Jesus Christ enjoyed peace by virtue of his own sinless nature; the sinner attains it through faith. Justification by faith includes both pardon and acceptance; and pardon has the same power that perfect innocence has, to confer peace. He who is free from debt by the remission of his dues, and he who cancels a debt by paying it, stand on the same ground as to freedom from pecuniary obligation; but the one gains this freedom through means fitted to excite his gratitude; the other cancels the obligation through his own ability to meet it.

A sinless being has peace because he perfectly obeys God, and thus fulfils all his obligations

towards him. Innocence is the foundation of his peace. But a sinner has no such innocence. He is under obligations to God, which he cannot meet. If he could perfectly obey in future, it would not take away the guilt of his past disobedience. He has no innocence, and how can he have peace? It is through forgiveness only. He may be pardoned, and accepted as innocent, for the sake of Christ who has died for him, and in whom he trusts. His sins may be forgiven, through the sufferings and death of Christ; and he may receive the benefit of his propitiatory sacrifice, by receiving and resting by faith on him alone. Thus accepting Christ by faith, he becomes a partaker of the benefits of his righteousness, and is treated as if innocent. He is forgiven, and received into the divine friendship, as freely as if he had never sinned. Peace is thus kindled in his soul, and, "being justified by faith," he has "peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

It is singular indeed, says one, if faith in Jesus Christ can take the place of innocence, and annihilate the painful effects of sin upon the soul. How can this be? I can readily understand how an innocent person can stand before God in quietness and joy, but it is not so clear to me how faith can produce upon the mind the effect of innocence.

Many turn from the Gospel plan of justification, and even treat it with contempt, because they do not understand it, and have no wish to experience its power upon their own hearts. Perhaps its simplicity is the ground of their neglect; for nothing can be more simple than its plan of mercy. Its natural effect upon the believing mind is to confer peace. Nor is this effect of faith peculiar to the Gospel. Suppose that you owe a thousand dollars, and have given your note for that amount payable at a certain time; but, through misfortune, you have been deprived of the means on which you depended to meet that payment when it should become due. Your mind would naturally become disturbed, nor could you see ruin coming upon you without disquietude. You strive to raise the amount necessary to meet your engagements, but fail to do so. And, while in deep distress, a friend goes to the bank, pays your debt, takes up your note, and encloses it to you as a free gift. You receive the enclosure, and your mind is instantly relieved. You believe that your obligations are cancelled, and faith removes your disquiet, and gives you peace. You are now as happy as if you had never come under such pecuniary obligations, or were able yourself to meet them. But you did not cancel that debt, nor did you see it

done; but you believe in the friend who did it for you. This faith has disburdened your mind of its fears, and kindled there a feeling of sweet repose, and of grateful love to him who has come to your relief. So faith in the Saviour removes from the sinner's mind his burden. Christ has met those obligations which would crush the sinner, and has suffered in his stead; and faith in him takes away the painful effects of sin, and imparts a calm and delightful repose in the Saviour.

This is no illusion, but a reality. It is a real transaction, to which the Gospel bears testimony. "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." He assumed our nature, and suffered in our stead. "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." "We are redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." He has so endured the penalty of the violated law, and so suffered in the place of sinners, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish. Faith assures the trembling sinner of pardon; and it therefore takes the place of innocence in conferring peace. For those, who receive and rest by faith on Jesus Christ, he hath suffered all that the law demands, and they therefore go free

from its curse. And more than this: they are accepted of God, and treated as if they had never sinned. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

To comprehend the nature of Christian peace, it is necessary to view its foundation; and how that which is conferred upon the sinner, differs from that enjoyed by the sinless. The effect upon the soul is the same in both instances. The pardoned sinner has the same quiet repose in God that the sinless have. But he attains this peace, not by virtue of his own innocence, but through faith in the Redeemer, by whom he is introduced into a pardoned state. This is the way of peace. It was the object of our Saviour's mission to earth to provide this way, that sin might be forgiven, and the sinner reclaimed to holiness. When Jesus became incarnate, therefore, the angels over the plains of Bethlehem sung in the wondering shepherds' ears, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men." Both in the Old Testament and the New, it is taught that the sinner's peace springs from the remission of his sins. These dispensations both have in view the same great end, differing in this only, that one anticipates the coming of the Redeemer; the other gives a full development of the nature of his mission.

The patriarchs enjoyed peace, as did the apostles, through faith in the same Saviour. The faith of Abel was essentially that of Paul. It differed in this only, that it viewed the object of faith from another point; the one believing in a Redeemer to come, the other in one who had already come. The repentance of David resembled that of Peter. These ancient saints obtained mercy through faith in the same Saviour, and both entered the way of peace through the same door.

This is the way of peace which the Gospel reveals as accessible to all who will walk therein. Through this, the wanderer from God may now return to him, and have the burden of his guilt removed. He may thus gain relief from the painful apprehensions which sin occasions, and have kindled in his soul a calm and peaceful joy. He who has entered on this way, is introduced into the friendship of God, and made happy in the consciousness of his love. His mind is relieved from all its anxieties, and instead of painful apprehensions, he feels a sweet, and undisturbed, and holy repose.

This is peace, and it is the fruit of true religion. It is a cheerful confidence in God which kindles this calm and holy delight in him. Relieved of his burden, the Christian pilgrim advances towards the celestial city, singing for joy.

His fears have vanished. God has become his friend; and in the nearness which he feels to him, he is conscious of a blessedness resembling that of heaven.

Chapter Third.

NO ELEMENT OF PEACE IN THE SINFUL MIND.

A SINNER is in a very different moral state from an innocent person. He comes, by sin, into the power of conscience, to suffer its reproaches. Mental disquiet is natural to man in his degenerate and fallen state; and it is in this state that he comes into the world. There is not a human being who is without sin. The evidence given in one's early life of a natural proneness to sin, is clear and undeniable. It is a fatal result of the great apostasy. "Sin entered the world, and death by sin; and so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

No individual of our race naturally possesses a holy mind, but one that is inclined to sin, controlled by carnal affections, and estranged from God. No one, however piously educated, naturally inclines to love and obey God. Unless the soul, in early childhood, experience a renovation of its moral affections, it will have no religion which will outlast the period of youth.

Amid worldly pleasures, it will forget God, or remember him only as an object of terror.

As we do not come by natural birth into a state of peace with God, neither do we reach this state through the growth and expansion of the intellect. The sinful affections of youth exist in greater strength in man. The passions which are dormant in youth, rise into their full power in manhood; sinful custom becomes habit; and the mind, advancing to maturity, still retains, with increasing strength, those affections which are alienated from God. There springs from the world no power to transform these affections, and to change them.

Nor is the mind changed, as to its essential character, by the religious observances to which it resorts for the recovery of its peace. Paul was a model Pharisee; and if his heart had been susceptible of a moral renovation through mere religious observances, he would have undoubtedly attained it. But his efforts to find peace in this way were fruitless. Never did he obtain it, till he penitently returned to God through faith in the gracious Redeemer. In like manner, all the appliances of a mere formal religion to recover one from a state of sin and misery, are utterly powerless. No application of water in baptism can change the spiritual affections of the soul, and restore the divine image lost by the

apostasy. Nor was baptism ever designed for such an object. The sacred Scriptures ascribe to it no such virtue. Whose soul has it ever renewed and changed? Where are the evidences that any such spiritual effect flows from its administration? Not all the waters of the Jordan, applied by consecrated hands, can wash away a single stain of guilt, or transfer the sinner from an unregenerate state to one of holiness. A presumptuous trust in this ordinance, as the means of regeneration, has arisen from substituting the symbol for the thing signified; the washing with water, for the spiritual cleansing of the Holy Spirit. "But except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Nor is this spiritual transformation effected through the use of any formal religious observances. All such means directed to this end are wholly powerless. They resemble the culture bestowed on a dead tree; for there is no spiritual life in the soul of man, no spark of divine love, which can thus be kindled into a flame. Man is, by nature, "dead in trespasses and sins." Every attempt to introduce spiritual life into his soul, by the invocation of saints, by fasting, and self-mortification, must utterly fail. To walk on one's knees around the tomb of a saint, or climb, in this way, a flight

of holy stairs, or measure one's length to some illustrious shrine, or perform a pilgrimage to the holy city, or to inflict stripes upon one's person, by his own hand, or by any self-inflicted tortures, it is impossible for one to effect a spiritual change in his own heart. Such austerities do not differ in principle from those practised by the heathen; and they have no power to confer peace upon the sinful soul. Nor is it in the power of any church, or priesthood, to do that for the soul of man which will take it out of its ruined state and introduce it into the kingdom of God.

The only access into the way of peace, which is possible for the sinner, is by a spiritual renovation. He "must be born again, or he cannot see the kingdom of God." He must return in repentance unto God, and receive the forgiveness of his sins, through faith in the Redeemer. The claim of God reaches far beyond the effect of any outward religious observances—even to the heart, with all its affections. This heart must be changed. In its natural state, it has no element of peace. For, "the carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So, then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God." "But to be spiritually-minded is life and peace."

The unrenewed mind includes in itself no el-

ement of peace. It is in a sinful and lost state; in one of condemnation and misery. Nor is it capable, by its own unaided efforts, of securing reconciliation with God. It needs pardon for its sins, and justification through faith in Jesus Christ. And it is because man is naturally in a sinful, lost state, that God has provided the mercy of the Gospel, to reclaim his alienated affections, and restore him to holiness and bliss.

Chapter Fourth.

HOW ONE, OPPRESSED WITH A SENSE OF HIS SINFULNESS, MAY COME INTO A STATE OF PEACE.

PEACE is not the result of a blind effort, on the part of man, to purify his own heart. The sinner can do nothing, in his own strength, to remove from his soul the burden of guilt. But he is responsible for its removal, because able to seek, and obtain this mercy, as it is proffered in the Gospel. His sins must be pardoned, and his soul renewed. The natural mind must become a spiritual one. He who has experienced this moral change, is essentially different from what he once was. His affections, which were once fixed supremely on himself, are now transferred to God. He loves him with all his heart; and this change in the controlling affection of his mind imparts a corresponding one to his desires and volitions. He has become "a new creature in Christ." "Old things are passed away, and all things have become new."

Before the experience of this change in his affections, man loves himself supremely, and

loves God only as the instrument of promoting his happiness. He loves himself first, and all other beings and things subordinately. He has no love to God for his intrinsic excellence; nor to the world for anything that it offers, in itself considered, but only for its power to please him. His thoughts and desires chiefly centre on himself; and he regards the world, and all its objects of delight, as subordinate to his own pleasure.

In this state of his affections, man has no real love for holiness; nor for God as a holy, just, and good being; but he loves whatever he thinks will promote his own happiness, and proportions his esteem to its estimated value in this respect. He loves the world, and the Prince of this world, on the same principle that he loves the pure and holy Jehovah—regarding both only as serviceable to himself. The character of the things which are loved enters not into his thoughts, but only whether they may become useful in the promotion of his own individual enjoyment. Thus, impenitent men as readily transgress the law of God, as they obey it, if they think their pleasure requires it. They not only love the things which are adverse to holiness, but the sinful being who represents them, more than they do the glorious and holy God. To love him supremely, must necessarily anni-

hilate their love of sinful pleasures; but in loving themselves supremely, it brings both the good and evil spirit into subordination to themselves, to stand side by side, and the one to receive, for the time, their special regard, who is conceived to be the most instrumental in the promotion of their pleasures. Thus the unrenewed man assumes, as the controlling principle of his conduct, to do that which he esteems for his own advantage. If he think it for his interest or pleasure to disobey God at any time, he will do it; for it is himself, and not God, that he aims supremely to please.

But conversion changes this governing affection, and brings the world and its pleasures into subordination to the love of God. It changes every inimical feeling of the soul to love, and moulds all its affections and volitions into conformity with the divine will. The changed soul thus comes into a spiritual and holy state. Its thoughts, desires, and volitions all derive their character from supreme love to God. God is first; and man and all his interests are subordinate. The creature has found his proper place. The moral order of things, disturbed by the apostasy, is now restored. God has risen to his appropriate place in the heart of man; and the world has sunk to its proper place.

But how, or through what means, does the

carnal mind thus become a spiritual one? A divine instrumentality only can effect this moral renovation, for it exceeds all human power. This means, grace provides. Were it not for the divine interposition, man would not feel the need of a new heart, nor seek it. But God, in his Gospel, provides a remedy for the moral evil of the apostate state; and, by his sacred teachings, precedes any interest which the sinner feels for his own salvation.

To excite his penitential return to him, he convinces him of his sinfulness, and shows him that nothing but forgiveness, and an entire change of his moral affections, can remove the evil. "What must I do to be saved?" is the inquiry naturally awakened under these teachings, and the impulses of the Holy Spirit which accompany them. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," is the reply; and this believing in Jesus Christ includes a yielding up of the soul with all its affections to Jesus Christ, and trusting in him alone for justification. It is in coming to Christ by faith that the burdened soul finds relief. In thus looking to Christ, the heart itself is changed, and a new tide of gracious affections bursts forth from it, as from a fountain, and flows onward towards God. It is the view of his goodness as displayed through the cross towards guilty man, which

effects this spiritual change. As the sinner gazes upon the Saviour, who died for him, and trusts in him, tears of repentance gush from his eyes and course down his cheeks. He is won by love; and he now turns from all his sins to God. Selfishness is slain, and God, as the object of supreme love, is elevated to the throne in that heart.

The spiritual renovation thus becomes complete. It is a work effected through the means and influences which the Holy Spirit has set in operation, and which are fitted to produce this change; and he who has experienced it, is "born of the Holy Spirit." He delights in God. He loves what he loves, and hates what he hates. He feels, and is enabled to say, "My soul thirsteth for God," which he could never say before.

This change breaks up the whole moral man, and constructs it on a new principle, even that of love to God. It is called a new birth, and a new creation. The soul, through this spiritual change, comes into a state of reconciliation to God, and of peace. The controversy has ended in the sinner's submission; and all the fears which once disquieted him are gone. In the soul, which is thus introduced into the love of God, there is peace; and he who has experienced this mercy, has come into the way of peace. The wandering child has returned to his Father.

The rebel has become a friend. Grace has triumphed; and there is joy among the angels of God in heaven over a sinner saved.

Chapter Fifth.

A PEACEFUL MIND DISTINGUISHED BY CERTAIN CHARACTERISTICS.

THERE is an essential difference between a mind controlled by supreme love to God, and one destitute of this spiritual affection. This diversity extends to all its thoughts, desires, and volitions. The mind may be known by its operations, as the tree is known by its fruit. So marked are the differences between the soul that is reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ, and one that is not, as readily to be discriminated. One may detect them in himself, and discover them in others. True religion as it exists in the soul has its distinguishing marks, and may be known by a proper discrimination of its evidences. It is important for one to know what his own spiritual state is, and whether reconciled to God or not.

No one wishes to deceive himself on this point; yet many are unquestionably deceived. They do not give their earnest attention to this subject, or else mistake the evidences of a moral

renovation. One must feel satisfied of his pardon, and acceptance with God, or he cannot feel peace. A false hope, like the house builded on the sand, may be suddenly overthrown. Through a storm of worldly temptations it may be swept away. But a true Christian hope is like the house builded on a rock. It endures firm amid temptation.

But though one have a good hope, it is not possible, at all times, to gain a comfortable assurance of it. The spiritual affections may be so languid, and the life so devoid of holy fruits, as to offer but few evidences of a renovated heart. But when the affections are active, and flow forth as from a living fountain, and when, in the life, the fruits of piety abound, this difficulty is not so great. But there needs ever to be great caution in discriminating the evidences of conversion.

You hope that you have found true peace; but how may you become assured that this hope is genuine, and that this peace is a fruit of true conversion? How may you ascertain it to be the result of a work of the Spirit in the soul? To aid you in deciding this question, I have set forth, in the six following chapters, the distinguishing marks of true religion, and now commend them to your deliberate and prayerful consideration.

Chapter Sixth.

SUPREME DELIGHT IN GOD, THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF TRUE RELIGION.

When, changed in its affections, the soul has come into a new moral state, and into the knowledge of its new relations, and has found peace, it is filled with wonder and delight in the contemplation of God. Never before did it feel in him such love and confidence. Never before had it such thoughts of his glorious excellence. It feels that it cannot think of him, nor praise him enough. The world seems changed in consequence of the change which the soul has experienced, and is full of God. The whole creation bears the impress of his glory. Every star that twinkles in the firmament, and every leaf and flower of earth, seem to praise him. These are the thoughts and feelings of the renewed soul, when God becomes the object of its supreme love. To him its thoughts now turn with complacent delight, and its desires rise to him as the most glorious of beings, compared with whom all worldly objects of interest fade away.

This love is real, and it assumes the place of those vile affections which once sought their gratification in the world. It is not upon an imaginary deity that it rests, but upon that glorious, eternal, and unchangeable being whose wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, now command the sympathies and affections of the renewed mind. Men, in their pride, would shape the character of God after their own notions. The heathen exalt the various desires and passions of the heart into deities, whose worship they love, because they delight in that which solicits and justifies, in their view, the unrestrained gratification of their own lusts. But God our Creator is very different from all such creations of fancy. He is the personification of virtue ; the fountain of excellence. In loving him, the soul loves the perfections which his character represents. It delights in virtue. It finds its chief pleasure in holiness. It loves God for those qualities of character which distinguish him as the most excellent and glorious of beings. It would not change a single attribute. It would not have him become, in any respect, different from what he is.

All true love to God is for his own intrinsic excellence. But there is an affection resembling this, and liable to be mistaken for it, which is merely selfish. Men often feel a kind of plea-

sure in the thought of God as good to them, who feeds, clothes, and sustains them, and whom, they hope, will save them; and they regard him as a very good and useful being, who sends his sun and rain to refresh the earth, and cause it to bring forth its fruits for their benefit. And, when the heavens smile propitiously upon them, and their fields yield their abundance, and they are in the enjoyment of health, they even fancy that they love this good being, when it is themselves only that they love. The only pleasure they feel in God is as the instrument of their happiness. It is only an inferior and selfish love which they bestow on him, and one that is subordinate to that which centres on themselves. And they love him, as they do every thing besides, in proportion to their estimate of his value to themselves.

This is the only love to God which the unregenerate soul ever feels. Sometimes it rises so high as to produce in one the impression that he has become a Christian. Even then it maintains its selfish character. It leads its possessor to speak much of heaven, and of his going thither, and of the beautiful things to be discovered and enjoyed. It kindles a love of religious meetings at times, because they tend to nurture the satisfaction felt at the thought of one's own future enjoyment. This delight all springs from the view

of one's self; and treats God as one who should lay himself, and all his infinite mercies, at his feet. It is a mere selfish pleasure, felt at the thought of one's own happiness. It is a happy feeling, which may readily be mistaken for love, and which may exist in the mind disconnected from all holy obedience.

But that love to God which is genuine, loves him for his own intrinsic excellence. It delights in him as an infinitely pure and holy being. It confides in him as a child in a loved parent. The heart turns evermore to him, with new affection, and ever-increasing delight. There is a calm and sweet repose in him, as in one whose providence preserves,—whose wisdom guides,—and who will cheerfully apply his wisdom and power for our necessities.

This love is the essential element of true religion. It is the characteristic affection of the soul which has been reclaimed to God, and born again of his Holy Spirit; which was lost through the apostasy, and is restored through grace. It evinces in that soul a renewed and holy state. It leads it supremely to God, to delight in him as a parent and friend. Its natural effect is to conform the soul to his holiness, and kindle in it a supreme desire to please him. Its fruit is obedience. This love is supreme. It loves God more than any other

being, or all others in the universe. It is accordant with the first or great command: "Thou shalt have no God before me." It brings into subordination to the will of God, and under control, every thought, desire, and volition of the mind.

In the thoughts of the converted soul, God ever dwells, as the object of holy pleasure. "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me," is the language of the pious Psalmist. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" But, as an object of supreme delight, God is excluded from the sanctuary of the worldly mind. The most pleasing thoughts of the unconverted man are of himself, his increasing prosperity, his riches, his pleasures, the estimation in which he is held by others, and his success in life. But his thoughts never turn to God with any pleasure, as do those of the renovated soul.

Saul, the king of Israel, had no such pleasant thoughts of God. He commenced his kingly career with an act of wilful disobedience, in which he treated him as subordinate to his own will, and ever after indulged the most unkind and disrespectful thoughts of him. But David so loved God, that the consciousness of having offended him overwhelmed him in deep contrition, and he exclaimed, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in

thy sight. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." And when he had become sensible of forgiveness, his joyful soul could not contain its emotions, and he poured them forth in grateful praise to God. No one can read his Psalms without a firm and abiding conviction that he loved God with all his heart; and that there was no pleasure ever experienced by him so great as that occasioned by meditation on his character.

The same delight in God affects the desires of the converted soul. These rise to him as to one who is more loved, and whose love affords more real happiness than all other objects of affection in the universe besides. The unconverted soul does not feel thus. It delights more in the world. Its desires go forth more cheerfully after worldly pleasures. They all centre upon one's self. The King of Babylon, when he had been triumphant in war, and had beautified the chief city of his empire, assumed to himself all the glory of his success. He erected an idol of gold, and exerted his kingly authority to secure its worship. He had no other wish than that which respected his own greatness. So the carnal mind cleaves to those worldly objects which may administer gratifica-

tion to its pride and lusts. Nor do the affections ever turn with delight to the contemplation of the holy God.

But the Christian feels otherwise. He longs for the manifestation of the Divine presence in his soul. Earnestly does he implore God to become his guide, his counsellor, and his friend. "My soul breaketh," he says, "for the longing it hath unto thy judgments, at all times." "My soul followeth hard after thee." "As the hart panteth for the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."

One who supremely delights in God, loves to speak of him. We love ever to speak to others of our friends who are of distinguished worth; so the Christian loves to represent God as honorable and excellent, and to commend him to others. The Psalmist gave expression to his feelings in language most appropriate and delightful. "I will extol thee, my God, O King; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. I will speak of the glorious honor of thy majesty, and talk of thy power. And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts, and I will declare all thy greatness." "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." All who love God, unite in such expressions of praise, because they supremely delight in him. And where their joy begins, that of the worldly mind terminates.

A desire supremely to please God is also characteristic of the mind that loves him. It is a natural fruit of love. Love naturally prompts one to make it the chief end and aim of his being to please God. But the carnal mind is susceptible of no such feeling. It leads one to seek the gratification of his own appetites and passions, and often, in doing that which God has expressly prohibited. But he who supremely delights in God, conforms his actions to his will, and finds his chief happiness in doing what he approves. Thus Paul, the apostle of Christ, had no other wish than to do the will of his heavenly Master. "God forbid that I should glory," said he, "save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." His whole life manifested a uniform desire to please his heavenly Master, and to finish the work given him to do. And this is the chief desire of every one who delights supremely in God.

In the illustration of this subject, you cannot have failed to mark the difference between the carnal and spiritual mind, as developed in the different estimation in which God is held by each. The one loves the world and its pleasures, because its affections centre on himself; the other supremely delights in God. The one loves to think of his own plans, and of the objects on

which his heart is set; the other loves to think most of God. The one is best pleased to converse about the worldly matters in which he is interested; the other delights most in the things which pertain to God. The one aims supremely to please himself; the other brings every thing into subordination to the will of God, and makes it the chief object of his life to please him. Which of these characters do you acknowledge as appropriate to yourself?

Is God the object of your supreme delight? The question is not whether you do not sometimes have pleasant thoughts of him as good to you, but do you delight in him as a holy being, who is possessed of every excellence, and who hates and will punish sin? Do you love him more than any thing besides? Can you appeal to him for the truth and sincerity of your affection, saying, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Have you this evidence of true peace? Can you say from your inmost soul, "Thou art my God;" "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee?" If so, you may rejoice in him; and your joy no man can take away.

Chapter Seventh.

A LOVE OF DIVINE THINGS FOR THEIR INTRINSIC EXCELLENCE, DISTINCTIVE OF GRACIOUS AFFECTIONS.

THE love of divine things, in the soul that is renewed, is for their real excellence. True love to God is founded on his character; and gratitude, in view of his mercies, ever takes this character into view. That gratitude which rejoices in the good bestowed, regardless of its source, is a mere selfish feeling; but true gratitude ever contemplates the motive of the gift, and the character of the giver. True love is ever founded on some real or fancied excellence in the object loved. He who marries a wife from an appreciation of her personal excellence, and he who weds for a fortune, act from very different motives. In the one case, love is genuine; in the other, it is spurious.

This distinction is just, and is of great value, as applied to the development of religious character. We may love God for what he is in himself, or as one whom we expect to bless us, and do us good; the former is a true affection,

the latter is not. True gratitude is a feeling of good-will towards one, in view of his kindness. Properly to appreciate this kindness, requires the character and motive of the benefactor to be understood. As felt towards God, it is not the gift, so much as the excellent giver, who excites in return the kind emotions of the grateful heart.

We love the flower for its beauty, the bird for its song, the landscape for the pleasure to the eye which it affords; and our love for these various objects takes into view their various natures and uses. We love God for his own excellence; and the things which he has made, proportionally, as they reflect his glory. It is not the intellectual greatness of the angels which inspires the Christian's love, in preference to fallen spirits, but their moral resemblance to God. Neither is it the intellectual character of Jehovah which is the foundation of love to him, but his moral worth combined with his natural perfections, and which together constitute him the most excellent and glorious being in the universe.

So, love to the sacred Scriptures, as expressive of the will of God to man, is founded on their excellence. "Thy word is very pure," said the Psalmist, "therefore thy servant loveth it." This word is the transcript of Jehovah's charac-

ter, and it therefore commands the warm affections of all who love him. "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day," is the expression of every pious mind. The thought of heaven, too, is loved, because it is a holy place. Prayer is loved, because it is a holy duty; and is a communication of the soul with the ever blessed God. And it is their moral resemblance to God, which is the foundation of that love which Chrisitans bear towards each other.

But there is a love of divine things which is very different from this. There is a love for God, separate from the consideration of his excellence, and which springs from a view of the good which he confers; and this may stand as the representative of a class of affections, all of which grow out of selfishness, and are consistent with the moral state of the unconverted soul. Thus one may love the angels, viewed as his guardian spirits, without any proper conception of their holiness; he may love the word of God, because he thinks he there discovers the evidence of his future happiness, when he has no attachment to the spiritual duties which it commands; he may love the worship of God, for the sake of its formalities, or the pleasant things accompanying it, when he loves not spiritual communion and intercourse with the Deity.

He may love religious conversation, more

from the pleasure of talking, than regard for the thing conversed about. "And hence it comes to pass," says Edwards, in his treatise on the affections, "that in their rejoicings and elevations, hypocrites are wont to keep an eye upon themselves; having received what they call spiritual discoveries, their minds are taken up about their own experience, and not the glory of God or the beauty of Christ. They keep thinking with themselves, what a good experience this is! What a great discovery this is! What wonderful things I have met with! And so they put their experiences in place of Christ, and his beauty and fulness. Instead of rejoicing in Christ Jesus, they rejoice in their admirable experiences. Instead of feeding and feasting their souls, in viewing the innate, sweet, refreshing amiableness of the things exhibited in the Gospel, they view them only as it were sideways. The object that fixes their contemplation is their experience, and they are ever feeding their souls, and feasting them on selfish principles, with a view of their discoveries. They take more comfort in their discoveries, than in Christ discovered. This is the true notion of living upon experiences and frames, and not our using them as an evidence of our good estate. It is very observable, that some who reject

evidences, are most notorious for living upon experiences, according to the true notion of it."

If one who is deceived as to his religious hope, once attain a persuasion that his sins are forgiven, and that he is truly converted, he will often express more joy in what he feels than the true Christian does; because, as has just been remarked, his joy is awakened more by his discoveries, than by Christ discovered. When you hear one speak of his own happiness, and find him ready to shout for joy because he is going to heaven, when he has no disposition to speak of the glories of God and the excellences of his holy nature, but it is all I, with him, what I have done, how I have felt, and whither I am going, you may set that person down in your mind as destitute, in all probability, of love to God, and as having only a selfish joy at his own imagined deliverance from punishment.

Joy is the effect of that love which is kindled in the soul, in view of the excellency of divine things; but in the case of the self-deceived, it is its cause. And the difference between one who loves and therefore rejoices, and one who rejoices and therefore loves, is vast indeed. The one has a pure and holy affection; the other only one that is selfish. The object which in-

spires the one, is the holiness of the things loved; that which inspires the other, is the thought of escape from future misery.

None but he who loves God for his excellence, ever loves divine things for theirs; but he in whom his love dwells, loves the beings and things around him, in proportion as they reflect the divine glory. We love the beautiful flowers, the gentle streams, the rich and variegated landscape, for their several excellent qualities. So, when our thoughts rise to God and take into view the excellency of his character, does our love ascend to him also. It is the admirable qualities of his character for which we love him. It is not for his power and wisdom only, but their union with his moral perfections, constituting him the perfect being that he is. As the sun is the fountain of light and heat to our world, so is God the fountain of all excellence. It is because he is great and good, that the affections of the converted soul are attracted to him.

We love the beings and things around us in proportion as they reflect his glory. But when we ascend to him, we reach the source. As he reflects glory upon no other, we are bound to love him for what he is in himself. The pious heart, adoring, dwells upon his excellence. So, also, it is the excellence of divine things which attracts the affections of the converted soul.

Many persons deceive themselves, by not properly distinguishing the nature of their religious affections, whence they rise, and on what they rest. There are many things connected with religion which may interest and please a worldly mind, and may, in some instances, lead to the belief that we love religion itself, when there is no love felt for the excellence of divine things, but only the dress in which they are presented. A fine church, an intelligent and wealthy congregation, and the mere circumstance and pomp of worship, may attract the worldly mind. Choice music, or an intellectual display from the pulpit, or a wish to be esteemed religious by others, have a powerful influence over men, and often prove to them the most attractive features of religious worship. It needs no spiritual renovation to feel an interest in these things. Their appeal is to natural taste or pride.

But it is a very different thing to love the worship of God because the soul loves to commune with him in the sanctuary, and at the communion-table, and loves the holiness which this worship represents. None but a heart spiritually renewed can feel this love. It is one which finds equal pleasure in communing with God in the closet. It loves holiness for its own sake. It passes by all that is merely external,

to fix itself on those qualities which bear a moral resemblance to Jehovah. It is true religion of the heart, in distinction from formality.

Does this affection exist in you? Is the pleasure which you feel in divine things that which springs from their real excellence? If so, your peace is genuine. It is based on a good foundation. It is not the peace of the hypocrite, but of one whose faith and hope rest on God, and whose joy no man taketh away.

Chapter Eighth.

THE THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS OF THE RENEWED MIND, SPIRITUAL.

The mind is the fountain of thought. It gives birth to the creations of the intellect, with a rapidity of which we are unconscious. It is the thinking agent; and the thoughts to which it gives rise, flow forth from it as naturally as water from a living spring. These thoughts indicate the character of the mind, on the same principle that the fruit does the nature of the tree.

Minds are distinguished by their different qualities and modes of thought. Those which resemble each other in natural endowment, may yet be very unlike. They may be naturally susceptible to the same emotions, but differ as to that which gives character and individuality to each. He whose thoughts are profound, and are directed to a high and noble end, is very different, in our estimation, from one whose thoughts are low, grovelling, and sensual. One whose thoughts express an uncommon original-

ity, or power, or flow forth in poetry or eloquence of a high order, we regard as a man of genius. He has very different qualities of mind from one less gifted, or who has enjoyed less intellectual culture, and the whole range of whose thoughts includes only the simple inquiries, What shall I eat, what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?

The poet and the philosopher give such different directions to their thoughts, that they may be said to live in different worlds, each occupying a sphere peculiarly its own. The votary of sensual pleasure differs from them both. The world in which he lives is sensual; and his mind is ever active in devising new modes of self-gratification, or meditating on his old pleasures, and acting them over again in his memory, to gather from them, through the aid of fancy, new and fresh enjoyment. But when the governing affection of the mind is changed, and God becomes enthroned in it, this change develops itself in the thoughts. These become spiritual and holy, and flow forth from such a mind as naturally as worldly and sensual ones did before. This constitutes a test of character, of great value to all who would know what manner of spirit they are of.

It is the proper mark of a regenerate mind, that holy thoughts naturally flow from it; and

that true piety, in such a mind, is as a living fountain which sends forth its pure and perpetual streams. Holy thoughts rise spontaneously there. The spiritual mind is naturally filled with pleasant thoughts of God and of divine things. They come of themselves. In the morning, at noon, throughout the day, and during the waking hours of night, they turn to God, the object of supreme affection, in holy delight, as readily as the needle to the pole. The spiritual mind finds its chief happiness in meditation on God, and in doing his holy will. It regards the world, and its objects of ambition and pleasure, as subordinate, while it exalts Jehovah upon the throne as the glorious object of affection, towards whom the soul in love is sweetly drawn.

Those are voluntary thoughts which rise of their own accord in the mind. Where the supreme affection is covetousness, the thoughts spontaneously follow its lead. Where sensual pleasure, or any other form of worldliness, is chiefly desired and sought, the thoughts, as from a fountain of sensuality within, rise of themselves towards the objects in which they find the most delight. So in the mind which supremely delights in God, the thoughts rise to him of their own accord. They cluster around spiritual things, because they delight in them; as the

thoughts of the sensual dwell on the object which they most love to contemplate. And yet, they are not perfectly holy, but are intermingled with others which are sinful. The converted mind, by reason of its old associations, old habits, and of its connection with the body whose corrupting influence is ever exerted on it, does not, at once, reach a perfect state, or one of sinless perfection. Its holy thoughts are mingled with sinful ones, and its operations are of a mixed nature. Hence the difficulty of discriminating the affections of the spiritual, from those of the carnal mind, especially when the former are cold and languid. It becomes necessary, therefore, carefully to observe the distinctive marks of these two classes of affection. Were the converted mind perfectly holy, and incapable of giving rise to a sinful thought, as the carnal mind is sinful, and incapable of a holy thought, it would be easy to make this discrimination. But, now, it is often quite difficult. Hence it is necessary carefully to inquire into the nature of that affection which assumes to be love to God, to discriminate it from that love which is merely selfish, and is the natural fruit of the unregenerate mind.

Where the affections are of a mixed character, it is necessary to observe their quality, rather than the height to which they are raised. A

love of God, for his intrinsic excellence, is a holy affection, and indicates true conversion in all in whom it dwells. But it may not rise to such height, or seem to be so influential, as that counterfeit affection which endures for a season, and in time of temptation falls away. So also it is important to distinguish the nature of the thoughts, and to ascertain the source from whence they spring. The unconverted mind is susceptible to the exercise of thoughts which bear the form and semblance of those which are the fruit of the Spirit, and which tend to deceive even the most careful judges. It is characteristic of such thoughts, that they spring from temporary causes, and cease so soon as that which occasioned them passes away.

"The thoughts of spiritual things," says Dr. Owen, "are, with many, as guests that come into an inn, and not like children that dwell in the house; they enter occasionally, and there is a great ado to provide proper entertainment for them; presently they depart, and are not looked or inquired after any more; things of another nature are attended to, and new occasions bring in new guests for a season; but children are owned in the house, are missed if they are out of the way, and daily provision is made for them. So it is with those occasional thoughts about spiritual things; by one means or another

they enter the mind, and are there entertained for a season; on a sudden they depart, and men hear of them no more. But those that are genuine and natural, arising from a loving, internal spring, they dispose the mind to them, and are as the children of a house; they are expected at their places and seasons, and if they are missing, they are inquired after; the soul calls itself to account, whence it is that it has been so long without them, and summons them to its wonted converse and fellowship."

Those religious thoughts which are temporary, and give no decisive evidence of the spiritual mind, chiefly arise from conviction. One who is a sinner may be compelled to think on religious things, by the inward force which is laid on his spirit; and he may be led to fancy that his mind has taken a religious turn, and is truly converted, when it is only a sense of his exposedness to danger, and his need of religion, that wakens his serious reflections; and when, if the pressure were removed, his thoughts would continue to flow in their accustomed channel. Many have fancied themselves converted persons, who have never known any other state of mind than that of one awakened, in which there is a desire expressed to be a Christian, and, perhaps, a purpose formed to serve God. This awakened state is sufficient of itself to pro-

duce serious thoughts. But like the seed sown on rocky ground, such thoughts endure only for a time; but when the sun is up, or there is a change in the religious feeling of the community, they vanish away.

Of the same nature are the religious thoughts awakened on a sick-bed. The pressure of the occasion excites them, and when this is removed they die out of themselves. "When he slew them," says the Psalmist, "then they sought him, and they turned and inquired early after God; and they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their Redeemer; nevertheless they did but flatter him with their mouths, and they lied unto him with their tongues, for their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant." This explains how it is that many persons who profess conversion on a sick-bed, and recover their health afterward, show, by their conduct, that all their serious thoughts of God arose from temporary causes, and had no foundation in a renewed mind.

The same is true of those religious thoughts which affliction occasions. It is common to regard one's self as made spiritually better in consequence of the sadness occasioned for a time by the illness and death of friends. In view of such providences, many form a purpose to

seek after God, and trust in it, as if it were something pleasing to Jehovah. They thus maintain a kind of seriousness till a change of scene bears their thoughts in other directions, and the world again resumes its complete ascendency over them.

Sometimes a solemn discourse from the pulpit will produce the same effect. It will awaken a momentary seriousness, which will presently pass away like the fleeting shadow of a cloud moving upon the earth. Sometimes a revival of religion, in which Christians are awakened, and the impenitent converted, will excite serious thoughts in many religious professors who are destitute of a renewed heart, and are only hypocrites in the Church, and lead them to feel a kind of pleasure in the work of God, which is in progress around them; and they may even manifest a spirit of engagedness for a time, till the cause which inspired it is removed, and then return to the same cold and dead state in which they were before. There is an internal conviction of their own unfaithfulness thus occasioned, which will draw out in serious reflections the thoughts of many who have no pleasure in spiritual things, but are influenced only by the occasion which excites them.

"Convictions," says Owen, "put a kind of force upon the mind, or cause it to act contrary

to its habitual inclinations. It is the nature of water to descend. But apply an instrument that shall compress it, it will fly upwards vehemently, as if that were its natural motion; but as soon as the force of the impression ceaseth, it returns immediately, descending towards its centre: so it is with men's thoughts, they are earthly, their motion is downwards to the earth, and the things thereof; but when any powerful conviction presseth on the mind, it forceth the egress of the thoughts upwards to heavenly things, and the soul will think much and frequently of them, as if that was its proper motion and course; but as soon as the power of conviction wears off, the thoughts return again to their old course as the waters tend downward."

"Water that floweth from a living spring," says the same excellent author, "runs equally and constantly, unless obstructed or diverted; but that which is from thunder-showers runs furiously for a season, and is quickly dried up: so are those spiritual thoughts which arise from a prevalent internal principle of grace, they are even and constant, unless interrupted for a season by temptation; but those which are excited by the thunder of conviction, however their streams may be filled for a season, they quickly dry up and utterly decay."

These illustrations show the difference between

those spiritual thoughts which arise from mere temporary causes, and are often mistaken for the fruits of the Spirit, from those which flow from the truly converted or spiritual mind. The one are involuntary, and arise from the pressure of causes which are temporary; the others are the voluntary and natural operations of the mind that supremely delights in God. Their flow is constant; but, in the present imperfection of our spiritual nature, may not be uniform. The living spring may be so affected by the drought, as, at times, to send forth only a very small rill; but still it is a living spring. So the spiritual mind may be so affected by temptations and other worldly causes pressing upon it, and drawing off its thoughts, as to produce but few and insignificant fruits of grace. But still God is enthroned in that mind; and, so soon as the pressure of worldly temptation is removed, the stream of its affections will swell to its natural size.

The thoughts indicate the nature of the affections, and show whether the mind supremely delights itself in God, and is a spiritual, holy mind, or the reverse. It is through the thoughts that the affections discover themselves. But these are but one class of the operations of the spiritual mind which show its true nature. The desires flow forth in the thoughts expressed, in the actings of the memory, and in the volitions,

all of which partake of the quality of the fountain from whence they flow.

The operations of the mind, therefore, need to be carefully scrutinized by one who would acquaint himself with his true spiritual state. It is important to observe whether sensual and worldly thoughts are the natural and constant product of that mind, and religious ones those which are created by a temporary pressure of conviction; or whether spiritual thoughts and holy desires are the natural fruit of the mind, interrupted only by temptations and the indwelling of corruption, in a heart partially sanctified.

There is an inward complacence in divine things felt in prayer and in communion with God, which indicates a truly spiritual mind. Religious duties are loved for the pleasure which the contemplation of divine things imparts. The mind is not forced to their performance, but turns to them naturally. It is not like a bow drawn, which flies back when the arrow leaves the string; but it continues to dwell on heavenly things because it loves them. It feeds with delight on the sweet and heavenly thoughts of God which prayer awakens, and finds in them its highest pleasure. The heart, like a living fountain, continues to send forth its pure and holy streams. It thirsts no more after the sinful delights which it once coveted. There is

enough in God to satisfy the cravings of its boundless desires; and when he fills the mind, all thirst after earthly pleasures is gone.

Of what character then are your thoughts? In what channel do they flow? To what objects do they most naturally tend? In what do they find the most pleasure? What evidence do you discover in the nature of your thoughts, that you possess that spiritual mind which is the abode of peace? Examine yourself by this test, and let not the world deceive you. You wish to know whether there is laid in your soul a foundation for true peace. For if you are deceived on this point, it will be in vain to instruct you how to live so as to continue in its enjoyment. Be sure that you have truly entered the way of peace through Christ, the door; for no mere semblance of religion will impart that spiritual joy and that future blessedness which you so earnestly desire. The joy of the hypocrite may rise like a sudden flash of light, and as quickly expire; and then it will leave the soul in darkness. But the joy of one who is truly born of God, will be "like the rising light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Chapter Ninth.

AN ASSURED BELIEF IN THE CERTAINTY OF SPIRITUAL THINGS, ARISING FROM THEIR DIVINE COMMUNICATION TO THE SOUL, A DISTINGUISHING FEATURE OF TRUE PIETY.

THE mind in its natural state knows nothing of true religion, excepting by its external evidences; the Christian knows it by his own experience. He who has never felt its power on the heart, forms his opinion of it from the facts and evidences set before him; but the Christian has the witness in himself; he has the consciousness of those spiritual affections in his soul, in which it essentially consists. Though he who has no such affections may judge correctly of the evidences to the truth and inspiration of the Bible, which are merely of an historical or argumentative nature, yet, as it respects the spiritual affections of the converted soul, he is wholly in the dark. He can form no proper conception of that love to God which is commenced in that soul, for he has had no experience of it.

The carnal and spiritual minds are controlled

by different and opposite moral affections; the one by supreme love of self, the other by supreme love to God. The one loves the world, and even God himself, as the means of his own happiness; the other loves God for his excellence, and brings every thing in the world into subordination to this love. Two minds, though equally endowed by nature, may yet be widely different: the one may be under the supreme control of selfish and unholy affections; the other, under the control of supreme love to God; and this love may extend its influence down, to bring into control, and subject to the will of God, every thought, affection, and volition of the mind.

Our Saviour uses one of the strongest metaphors to describe the change of heart which occasions this diversity, when he says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The mind thus changed comes into the knowledge of spiritual religion by its own experience, and thus acquires a certainty of belief respecting it, which no argument of the skeptic can ever shake. In addition to miracles, prophecy, and other external evidences common to men, it has the knowledge, derived from its own experience, that what the Bible teaches respecting the spiritual affections of the converted soul, is true.

He who has experienced this moral renovation, feels an assurance of the certainty of divine things which no other person can. That love to God which he now feels, removes all his prejudices, solves his doubts, and enables him to see clearly what he did not before perceive. No sooner is he converted, than he is ready to exclaim, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." No sooner does God possess the heart, than truth flashes on the intellect. Few, comparatively, have ample opportunity to investigate the evidences of the Christrian religion as they are emblazoned on the historic page. There are few whom an ingenious skeptic may not puzzle by the objections which he can raise. And if it depended on external evidence alone whether the Bible should be received, many would find no solid ground on which to rest their hope.

But the external evidences of religion, though invaluable in their place, are not those which excite in the Christian the firmest and most abiding conviction of the certainty of divine things; but it is the knowledge which he gains of them by his own experience. There are many who love Christ, who are ignorant of any book but the Bible; and many have suffered martyrdom for their religion, who have had no knowledge of the historical evidences of the truth

of the sacred Scriptures; and yet they have died in the full assurance of their truth, because this truth was attested by their own experience.

To the converted mind, there is imparted a power of spiritual discernment through which it makes the discovery of God's glory, and sees in him a moral beauty which it never perceived before. But now the spiritual eye is opened. Love to God, reigning within, leads to the discovery of his excellence. God thus communicates himself to such a mind. It is such a revelation as is described by the apostle when he says, "For God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." In the soul that is born of God, there is a perception of spiritual things, and a sight and enjoyment of them, which is real and substantial. It is as if one were introduced, by conversion, into a new world. The Christian no more doubts the certainty of those spiritual realities with which he is conversant, than he does the objects of his natural vision. He knows them by his own experience.

These are as real to him as his own existence. And it is in view of this, that the soul feels an assured certainty of them. What we know through our senses, we cannot doubt; and what

we know by our own consciousness, is equally real and substantial. The thoughts and affections of the mind have as real an existence as the trees and the mountains. They are affections of the spiritual nature; but they are not, on that account, less worthy of our confidence. Love to God as truly exists in the converted soul, and may be shown to exist there, with as much certainty, as any material object can be proved to have an existence. Because it is an affection of the mind, it is not, therefore, a nullity. Life or death, in the case of the murderer, turns on the proof of his having been governed by malice, in taking human life. Malice may as readily be proved, as the existence of a river, or a hill. So may the affections of the converted soul. It is the reality of these affections which produces a conviction of their certainty. It requires no volumes of human lore to convince a Christian that the religion of the Bible is true; for he knows it from a higher source. No infidel objections can ever shake his faith; for it is not founded in books, but in what he knows from his own consciousness of the love of God shed abroad in his heart. He believes, therefore, with certain assurance. "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit."

This certain assurance springs from the divine

communications to the soul. Thus our Saviour said, "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." "This is the will of him who sent me, that every one that seeth the Son and believeth, may have everlasting life." "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." True faith is not an operation of the intellect only, but springs from the heart. Satan may give an intellectual assent to the truth, and yet hate the God of truth. But faith is the confidence of the soul reposed in God, as one supremely loved. It is this confiding spirit which brings the Christian into a nearness to God, and to look up to him with the humble and submissive temper of a little child. This faith springs from the heart, and is distinctive in its character. It is the fruit of that gracious operation by which God reveals himself in love to those who love him, and their minds are invested with a spiritual discernment of his excellence and glory.

This faith is accompanied with a practical assurance that God exercises a wise and holy providence over the world. One may believe in the truth of religion, in consequence of having been religiously educated. But the Christian's belief springs from his own experience of that new heart in which religion consists. It is

thus that a conviction of the reality of divine things is produced on the mind, which is fully equivalent to knowledge; so that Paul, in view of Christ revealed to him, could say, "I know in whom I have believed;" and Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

But of this source of knowledge the natural mind is destitute. In a certain sense, it believes in God; but its faith is that which is common to fallen spirits, who "believe and tremble." There is no foundation of an assured faith laid in such a mind. It has had no experience of that love to God which is the characteristic affection of the true Christian; and it does not therefore apprehend the reality of divine things with such an entire certainty. Its faith lacks the chief element of true Christian faith, an affectionate confidence in God awakened by the experience of his love. It may therefore be subverted and overthrown by the arguments of the skeptic. But the Christian's faith is that assured confidence in God, as supremely loved, which is the result of a spiritual change in the soul itself, is gained by consciousness, and has all the certainty of knowledge.

Accompanying this faith, as the production of grace, is true humility. The natural tendency of God's communication of himself to the mind, is to awaken in it a deep sense of unworthiness.

Repentance is characteristic of the renewed soul. It views sin as a wrong and injury done to God, grieves over it on this account, and turns from it with holy sorrow, and with a full purpose, and endeavor, to sin no more. But the natural mind has no such feeling. It may be sensible, at times, of disgust felt for the pleasures of the world; it may fear to commit outbreaking and disgraceful sin, and tremble in view of danger, but it knows nothing of true repentance. It has no proper sense of sin as committed against one who is supremely loved. It knows by its experience no inward loathing of it, because it is hateful to God. Yet this is the state of mind of all who are truly converted. It is a real affection; not fancy, but fact. And it is the existence of this feeling in the Christian's soul, which imparts to him the assurance of its certain possession.

Of supreme love to God, also, the natural mind knows nothing by experience. One may feel a kind of pleasure in God, regarded as good to him, and the instrument of promoting his happiness; but this is not true love. This regards him for what he is in himself, and for his own intrinsic excellence. None but the Christian has ever experienced this love. It is characteristic of the converted soul only. And this affection is as real as is the soul itself.

Hope is also associated with faith. It is the anticipation of future blessedness. It is founded on the veracity of God, and is kindled in the soul through its experience of pardon, and in view of the evidences of its divine acceptance. It strikes its roots deep into Christian experience, and is a reality of which one is as conscious, as of any other affection of the renovated mind.

Joy rises from the perception of God as an excellent and glorious being, and as honored and loved. It is love to him arising from the view of his excellence, accompanied with the communications of his grace to the soul which wakens joy; and this also is a real emotion, unknown to the carnal or unconverted mind. This, and all the Christian graces which have been enumerated, are the effects of the divine communication. They are real affections of the renewed mind. They flow forth from such a mind, in holy exercise, as naturally as water from the crystal spring; and they develop the character of the Christian as very different from that of the unrenewed man.

The natural mind has no such affections; nothing of this kind on which to establish a conviction of the certainty of divine things, or of that belief which is equivalent. It has no such knowledge, and consequently no such assured belief. God in his glorious excellence has

never been communicated to that mind as the object of faith; nor has it any spiritual discernment of him as supremely loved. However clear its perceptions of truth in natural science, yet nothing but darkness reigns in it, as to the nature and excellence of true religion. Its spiritual eye has never been opened. Its affections have never risen to God. It is out of the circle of divine knowledge, and, in its judgments respecting spiritual things, is like a blind man beating the air. So ignorant, blind, and dark is the natural mind, as to spiritual things, as to be absolutely incapable of perceiving them. For "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

But in the Christian, a new and holy principle is developed. "The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith of the Son of God," is the testimony of the converted Paul. There is a new and lively confidence felt in God, as the object of supreme affection; and a conviction of the absolute certainty of divine things which nothing can ever disturb, produced by the experience of the love of God, and inspiring a life of holy obedience. This faith is a deep, abiding, and influential principle, which controls the whole man. He who has it, cannot fail to manifest it. He will treat God, his word, his

ordinances, and his revealed truth, as worthy of entire confidence. It is around religion that his thoughts, desires, and volitions will naturally cluster. Nor can the principles which have now been set forth dwell in any mind, and not subordinate it, with all its affections, to the will of God.

Here we reach a practical test which is applicable to the development of our own character. Have we this abiding faith, which is thus influential upon the life? Is God first and chief in our affections; and have the world, and all its pursuits and pleasures, assumed their appropriate place, as subordinate objects in our esteem? Do you know, by experience, that true religion which consists in a heart renewed and changed? Do you discover in the consciousness of right affections towards God, a substantial ground for that conviction of the certainty of divine things which leaves no doubt of their reality? And how does this affect your life? Do you habitually treat divine things as true, and as the most excellent of all human attainments? Are you living under their influence? Is yours the life of faith, and of obedience? If so, you have the evidence upon which you may confidently rely, that yours is that true peace which the Saviour gives to all who love him.

Chapter Tenth.

CONFORMITY TO THE SPIRIT AND TEMPER OF JESUS CHRIST A CHARACTERISTIC MARK OF THE TRUE CHRISTIAN.

JESUS CHRIST is our example. When on earth, he was affected with the emotions and sympathies of our nature, but without sin. He resembled man in a state of holy innocence, and was a sample of what the Christian will become, when perfectly restored through grace. But there was a perfection in our Saviour which does not exist in the Christian, though the traits of his character are in kind the same. The Christian is not perfect, as Christ was, but is in a state of transition. A new and spiritual life has begun in his soul, which will develop itself in complete sanctification. Christ could not feel repentance, having never sinned; but this feeling is appropriate to the Christian. The resemblance between our Saviour and the Christian, therefore, is such only as can exist between a perfectly holy being, and a sinner who earnestly longs to be thus holy.

As it was the chief aim of Jesus Christ, in all

that he did, to please God, so is it the Christian's great endeavor. When our Saviour was but twelve years of age, he felt that he must "be about his Father's business." It was his wish to do the will of his Father in heaven, and to finish his work. The habitual reference of his mind was to the divine will, as the rule of his actions; and this is expressed in the summary of prayer given to his disciples: "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." The language of his soul in suffering was, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." This eminent trait of character ever dwells in the Christian. There can be no true religion in one who does not make it the chief motive of his actions to please God. Devotion to his will does not rise so high in the Christian as it did in Christ; but it is the same in kind. It is the same holy principle reigning within. It distinguishes him from what he once was. For no man, while unconverted, ever acts from such a motive. It is the chief aim of one unconverted, to please himself; but of the Christian, to please his heavenly Father. And, in this respect, he resembles Christ.

This supreme regard for God inspires a hatred of every thing displeasing to him. The Christian hates his own former disobedience, and the sins of his past life, and turns from

them in contrition. It is evident that the same holy principle reigns in him that dwelt in the Saviour; that he loves the same duties, and hates the same sins that Christ does. His endeavors to please God may be accompanied with many imperfections, and he may often fail where he hoped better things; but still it is the purpose of his mind, and the governing principle of his actions, to be guided by the divine will. The spirit of obedience is therefore the chief element of the Christian's character. In this respect, the disciple resembles the Master.

As Christ was inspired by love to others, and a sincere desire to bless and save them, so also is the Christian. It was love to man which drew the Saviour from the skies, and led him to offer up his life a sacrifice for his redemption. To become to him the instrument of good, our Saviour cheerfully assumed the place of a sufferer. And the same virtue dwells in the Christian. It is the same in kind, though it rises not to equal perfection. The Christian loves to do good, and is governed by benevolence such as Christ felt. The missionary of the cross, who denies himself the privileges of civilized life, to toil and die in a foreign land, laboring to confer the blessings of the Gospel on others, is an imitator of Christ. The Christian, who has

the spirit of Christ, has that true benevolence which aims to do good everywhere. The idea of a selfish or covetous Christian is foreign to that spirit of true religion which leads one to lay himself and all that he has at the feet of Christ, and to feel that he lives not unto himself, but unto him who loved him and gave himself for him. True religion delights in a good action, because it reflects glory upon God. It aims not to be seen of men, but to approve itself unto our Father in heaven. Love to him governs all the actions. Hence, to feel like him, to be like him, and to act like him, becomes the disposition of the Christian.

Not that, in the exercise of this benevolence, he is perfect, for he is in a state of transition; and while passing from under the power of sin to complete sanctification, much that is impure and sinful is mingled with his best services. But it is the nature of the affection, not the height to which it is raised, which marks its resemblance to Christ; it is not the value of the offering, but the heart which is disposed to confer it, which gives evidence of a true affection. Hence our Saviour said, that "whosoever shall give a cup of cold water to a disciple in my name, shall not lose his reward." And the ground on which he bases the award of the final day, is the love to him manifested in acts of kindness and mercy

to others. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

But the benevolence of the carnal mind is not prompted by supreme regard to Jesus Christ, but by a principle of selfishness. It gives one a better opinion of himself, or wakens this opinion in the minds of others, for him to be liberal; or, there is a natural generosity of temper which is gratified, or an inward satisfaction awakened, in doing a good action. Governed by motives of selfishness, men will run great risks of life to secure worldly riches, and win popular applause. But the glory of God is not the motive which inspires them. Many who are generous in their charities, are yet profane in their discourse, and open in their disregard of the law of God; thus showing that their gifts have not been prompted by love to God; and that they are not generous out of regard for him, as is the Christian. For he who loves the Saviour, is governed by his will in the disposal of his wealth, as he is, also, in the use of the means to acquire it. And thus, resembling Christ in his disposition, it becomes manifest to himself and others that he is his true disciple.

A heart, adverse in its inclinations to the spirit and temper of the world, characterized

our Saviour, as it also does those who love him. The worldly affections which chiefly control and govern unconverted men, had no influence upon Jesus Christ. He rose above such inferior motives of action, and thus became an example to his disciples.

The love of money is one of the strongest and most influential of human passions. What self-denial and toil have not been endured, and what crimes have not been committed by men, to enrich themselves? Often, the older they grow, the tighter they draw their purse-strings. Habit rivets their covetousness upon them, and this habit is strengthened by age. But our Saviour manifested no such spirit. He had all the kingdoms of the world at his disposal, and yet he often hungered for food, which he had no means to purchase. It was a spirit of benevolence, and not of covetousness, which governed him. And this is the spirit of his disciples. Their whole aim, in the acquisition of property, is to use it in a way to gain the approbation of Heaven, and to do good to those around them.

Ambition is another trait of a worldly mind. To rise in the view of the world, and run a brilliant and popular career, or to gain wealth and distinction, are objects to which the temper of the world leads men to aspire. But Jesus Christ could not be tempted in this way. He had no

wish to gain human applause, but only to approve himself unto God as faithful in the duties which he had assumed. In this respect, also, the Christian becomes an imitator of Christ. He leaves the paths of ambition to be trodden by others, who have no higher aim than such grovelling pursuits, and seeks only to approve himself to his Master in heaven as a faithful servant.

Neither pride, lust, nor revenge found any abode in the bosom of the pure and holy Jesus. He who was chief among the glorious beings in heaven, laid aside his crown, descended to earth, took upon him our nature, and, in the spirit of humility, went about doing good. No allurement of the carnal mind ever influenced him. When he hung upon the cross to die, his last breath was spent praying for his murderers. In all the affections of his mind, Christ was adverse to the spirit and temper of the world; so is the Christian. He seeks no outward display, from a desire to attract the admiration and envy of others. He yields to no alluring sins. He cherishes no malignant feelings. He is like Christ in his disposition, and has this evidence, that he is truly born of the Holy Spirit.

A holy and heavenly frame of mind characterized our Saviour, as it does his followers. In all his conversation and actions, this spirit

was manifested. He lived in communion with God, and under the influence of the spirit of prayer. Not a sin did he commit. No stain ever marked his character. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Such also is the Christian. Though he falls far short of the perfection of his Master, yet he loves the same holiness, and presses on in the same path. His soul is filled with the most exalted and delightful thoughts of the divine excellence and glory. He loves to meditate upon it. He loves spiritual things. Heaven presents itself to him as a delightful place, because it is holy ; and there his affections centre, because God is there.

Thus the Christian ever bears a moral resemblance to Christ. The same holy temper reigns within him, and the same love and obedience. And this fact may enable you to discern whether or not you are a Christian. Does this spirit dwell in you? For "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Does the spirit of true benevolence inspire your actions? Are your desires adverse to the temper of the world? Have ambition, lust, and revenge no influence over you, compared with the love of Christ? Do you forgive even your enemies? And is it the chief aim of your life to please God? Possessed of the same holy affections

with Christ, do you aim in all things to do his holy will? Have you this evidence abiding in you, that you love him? If so, the peace which Christ felt is yours, and in him you may rejoice, with joy that is unspeakable, and full of glory.

Chapter Eleventh.

OBEDIENCE TO GOD THE FRUIT OF DIVINE LOVE.

Love to God in the heart is naturally developed in the life. A holy action cannot spring from a malicious motive, nor a malicious one from a benevolent motive; but it is true in morals, as in horticulture, that the tree is known by its fruit. Holy affections are developed in acts corresponding to their holy nature. It is never suspected that love to God gives rise to gross outward sins, but such sins are justly ascribed to the affections from whence they spring. It is not religion which leads men to live in the habitual neglect of religious duties, but its moral opposite. Spiritual and holy affections lead to corresponding acts. To this principle the apostle refers the case of Abraham, when he said, "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by his works was faith made perfect?" The offering of his son Isaac proceeded from a principle of inward faith. So love to God invariably manifests itself in the life.

The mind under the supreme control of love to God, is productive of very different fruit from that which is controlled and governed by the opposite principle. The spiritual mind never legitimately gives birth to an act that is purely sinful, because its governing motive is love; and it cannot sin, because it is born of God. Nor can the selfish mind give birth to an act that is pure and holy. But there are actions of a mixed nature which spring up in the converted soul, and how are we to regard them? This point is of great practical importance. How are we to explain the fact, that the purest and best actions of the Christian are imperfect, and mingled with sin?

One who is converted, has come into a state of supreme, but not of perfect love. That love is supreme, which loves God more than any other being in the universe; that is perfect love, which loves him in perfect accordance with the full powers and faculties of the mind. Perfect love is the state of sinless beings in heaven. But supreme love is that of a soul converted. One comes by conversion into a state of supreme love, and presses on towards that which is perfect. The Christian race lies between supreme and perfect love. "Not as though I had already attained," said Paul, "either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend

that for which I am also apprehended of Jesus Christ. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ."

It does not follow that one is not converted because he is imperfect, and liable to temptation. Paul felt this imperfection when he said, "I find then a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." And yet he could say, "I delight in the law of the Lord after the inner man." The Bible represents the life of the Christian as a warfare, a conflict, a struggle, a race. And this accords with all Christian experience. In the imperfect state of his spiritual affections, the Christian is liable to temptation and sin. How then do the spiritual affections of the converted mind manifest themselves; and in what way may it be known that he is a real Christian?

The difference between the Christian and others is, that he brings forth, in his life, the fruits of true obedience. Amid his imperfections, there are acts done which are pure, spiritual, and acceptable to God. He loves virtue for its own sake; and loves to do that which is

pleasing to his Father in heaven, and accordant with his holy will. In this, the true obedience of the spiritual mind consists. The Christian lives for God, and finds his highest happiness in doing the things which please him, delighting in such obedience.

This conformity to God includes obedience to the Gospel, as the means of attaining that perfect holiness which is the end of redemption. The Gospel is only a means to an end. It is designed to bear the affections of the soul on to that state of perfect love and sinless obedience from which man originally fell. Consequently, it demands an essentially obedient spirit in all who are truly converted. Faith in Jesus Christ, restoring confidence in God, naturally brings the soul, with all its powers, into conformity to the divine will; and it is its tendency to reclaim the soul, leading it to conflict with the world, and to overcome it, till that perfect state which has been described, shall be reached.

The obedience of the Gospel is the same in kind as that rendered to the moral law. In both, God is acknowledged, and his will respected. And it is this practical obedience which constitutes the proper fruit of the spiritual mind. It is the test of genuine conversion. True obedience flows from right affections. It is not forced, but natural. Men may strive, at times,

to fulfil their duties to God, when there is no true obedience. When conscience disturbs them, they may retire and pray; or, when trembling in view of danger or death, they may, through fear, force themselves to the performance of acts which they hope will pass for true religion; but, so soon as the inciting cause passes away, they will return to the world, and to their forgetfulness of God, because this state is the most natural to them. Thus Job asks respecting the hypocrite, "Will he always call upon God?" Implying that he will not do it; for, though he may seek him for a time, yet he will presently neglect the duties of religion, for other pursuits more pleasing and delightful.

Men, under conviction, may promptly observe their religious duties, to soothe their troubled minds, and not because they have any pleasure in them; and, during a revival of religion, they may continue to pray. But when a short period shall have elapsed, they will be found indulging their old pleasures, and again living to the world. But, in true conversion, obedience is the natural state, and worldliness the exception. The Christian, in his imperfect state, may fall into temptation, and be led into departures from God; but these are sins over which he mourns, and of which he repents so soon as discovered; and the soul naturally and speedily falls into an

observance of the rules of the Gospel, as being the state most in accordance with that love to God by which it is governed.

This is evident from the history of eminent saints. Abraham believed God, and it was natural to him to obey; yet he sinned. So also Moses and Aaron found their chief happiness in the service of Jehovah; and yet they were excluded from the temporal Canaan, and not permitted to tread upon its soil, because they had transgressed against the Lord. David, as to the uniform tenor of his life, was obedient, delighting himself in God after the inner man; but his dreadful fall showed that even his obedience was accompanied with sin. The same is true of Peter, who denied his Lord; and of Paul. Yet the natural and habitual course of their lives was one of true obedience. Their sins were the exceptions to that spirit of obedience which naturally controlled their actions.

True obedience is habitual. This is evident from the remarks already made. Custom creates a habit; and customary obedience renders the service of God natural and delightful. It is the natural desire of the converted mind to please God. This indicates, with entire certainty, the state of that mind as conformed in its spiritual affections to his holy will. Nor is it possible for any thing to take the place of this obedience

as evidence of conversion, which shall be equally satisfactory.

Men's lips will often give expression to religious conversation, and they will tell what great things they have felt, and what their peculiar frames of mind were at different times; but this may be only a kind of religious talk which proceeds from self-righteousness. But habitual obedience to God's commands is a much safer test. The lips may give a false coloring, but a holy life will never deceive. Such a life, as a test of conversion, is worth every thing besides. The habitual acts of the Christian indicate, both to ourselves and others, what manner of spirit we are of. Some who are most gifted in prayer, and excel others in the propriety and fitness of their expressions, being endowed with most excellent gifts, lack that holy living which is needed to give enforcement to what they say. One, whose heart is wholly given to covetousness, may possess gifts which seem to indicate the truly spiritual mind. But a life of grinding oppression towards the poor, of undue anxiety after the world, of stinginess towards benevolent objects, and of disregard for the principles of true benevolence set forth in the Gospel, is more certain evidence of self-deception, than all the fine speeches and excellent prayers offered in public, are of true religion. Take what view of this

subject we may, we shall uniformly discover that habitual obedience to God is the great test of piety.

Where it is as the fruit of true conversion, it is the end and aim of life. It is not only natural, flowing from right affections within, as the stream does from the fountain; it is not only habitual, developing itself daily and constantly as a fruit of the Spirit, but it is the chief object of life. Compared with this obedience, every thing else sinks into insignificance. This is illustrated in the conduct of Daniel and the three children in Babylon. They refused to disobey God, even at the hazard of their lives. Thousands of Christian martyrs have had their piety tested in like manner. Their principle was, obedience to God at all hazards; and, though these individuals may have been tempted and have sinned in other respects, yet, when the case was fairly set before them, and they were required, in the presence of thousands, to choose the alternative of disobedience to God or death, they chose the latter. This shows that they regarded it as the chief end of their being to obey God and live to his glory. And this is the end and aim of all true Christians.

This spirit of obedience, developed in the life, constitutes the test of all true piety. One may be deceived as to his frames of feeling, when he

cannot be deceived as to the tenor of his actions. Let him investigate all the transactions of his life, secret and open, those obvious to the world, and those which are known to himself only, and he cannot fail, from the habitual course of his life, correctly to deduce his own spiritual standing.

And this obedience is the test of true piety, in the view of others. The world judge of the Christian by the habitual tenor of his life, more than any thing else; and if his professions are good and his example bad; if his conversation is heavenly, and his practice covetous and sinful; if his prayers are fluent, and his habitual dealings are corrupt and oppressive; if he appears as a saint, and, in the view of those who know him best, is destitute of a principle of integrity, the world will write him down a hypocrite, and their decision will be sustained in the high court of heaven's chancery. Hence the instructions of Christ, "by their fruits ye shall know them;" and "the tree is known by its fruit." "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." Ostensibly you are a disciple of Christ. But does your life give evidence that you supremely love God? I do not ask whether you have sometimes been able to

force your thoughts up to an attentive observance of religious duties, but whether, in the practical business of life, you manifest a spirit of true obedience?

Is this obedience natural? Does it flow forth from the fountain within, as naturally as water from a living spring? Have you become so changed in heart, that what was once foreign to your mind and distasteful, has now become natural? Do your thoughts instinctively turn to the rules of the Gospel as your guide; and does your mind rest in the will of God revealed, as your delightful duty? There is a kind of religion which consists only in occasional and forced attempts at the performance of religious duties, while the natural flow of the affections from day to day is to the world, and the constant occupation of the mind is with worldly things. But this is the religion of the self-deceived. Spiritual affections reigning within take the thoughts, desires, and actions all out of the channel in which they formerly flowed, and divert them into a new channel. And, as the stream flows naturally and easily from its fountain, so does this obedience flow from the spiritual affections which now assume control. Is this descriptive of your state? I do not ask what are your professions or the fancies of your mind about religion, but do you delight in this practical obedience to God

which is natural to the converted soul? Is it natural and easy for you to meditate on God, and do you love such holy meditations? Is it natural, when the hour of worship comes, to present yourself before God in the attitude of prayer? Do you feel that he is to be obeyed above every other consideration, and, in all the transactions of your life and in your pleasures, is God's holy will kept before your mind as the delightful object of your reverence?

That obedience, which is the fruit of conversion, is habitual. A mere occasional regard for religious duties is no test of love to God, for it may spring from a momentary excitement. But it is different when it is habitual. It then shows the mind to be right with him. Are you conscious of this habitual tendency? Is it your constant endeavor to live a holy and a devoted life?

This obedience is also the end and aim of life in all who supremely love God. Men have different objects of which they are in pursuit, and they live to different ends. But it is the aim of the true Christian to please God in all things. Is it thus with you?

Many deceive themselves on this point. Many who profess religion live as the unbelieving world do. The evidence of their life is all against them. And where will they appear at

last? I seem to see one who has thus lived to the world, advancing with trepidation to the celestial gate, and knocking there. He has come fresh from some midnight carousal, from the halls of mirth and revelry, or from behind his counter, clutching in his hand the hard dollars which he was unwilling to leave behind; I see him advance in haste, followed by the curses of the poor, the widow, and orphan whom he has oppressed; I see him, a prayerless man, summoned from amid a family whose spiritual interests he had neglected, while he sought the world. Suddenly called away from the active pursuits of life, where religion had no place, he advances tremblingly, with terror depicted in his countenance, the excitement of the scene hardly allowing him time to think. He knocks, but there is no answer. He knocks again and again, and, when one from within demands a reason of the hope that is in him, he is speechless. His thoughts recur to his life, and he finds no consolation in the review of its wasted hours. And while he reflects, conscience convicts him; terror fills his soul. And now the dreadful response is given, "I never knew you, depart from me;" and he sinks to rise no more.

Do you ever think of a scene like this? Have you the evidence, in a holy life, that your case will be different? Examine this point, with

earnestness to know the truth. Take all the evidences which have been set before you, and, if you find them in yourself, then may you hope that you know, by experience, true religion. Peace will flow from this conviction, and joy be awakened in view of the fact that God is yours. Never can you know true peace till you find in yourself this living evidence.

Chapter Twelfth.

THE WAY OF HOLINESS THAT OF PEACE.

THE traveller who had been pursuing the road to death, has now turned from it into the narrow way that leadeth unto life. How can I communicate to those who have not known it by experience, the knowledge of that calm delight which fills the soul of one who has just entered this way? No tongue can describe the blessedness of that state in which sin is forgiven, and God assumes that place in the affections of the mind which was once filled by the world, and the turbulent and conflicting waves of passion have subsided into a calm repose. The thoughts, desires, and steps of him who has entered this way, are now directed towards heaven. He leaves his old companions, old pursuits, and old habits, and begins to live anew. He seeks new friends and new enjoyments. He loves the society of Christians, and enters into covenant with them to serve God. All those characteristics of reconciliation to God, which have been described, he discovers in himself,

and the result of these evidences of the divine friendship is, to produce in the soul a firm and abiding peace.

Here, in the way of holiness, the divine promises meet him, and shed their blessed influence into his soul. Observe the nature of these promises, and with what explicitness they set forth the assurance of God's mercy to all who obey him. "Great peace have they who love thy law." "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." "Mark the perfect man and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." "For, though the mountains depart and the hills be removed, yet my kindness shall not depart from thee, nor the covenant of my peace, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." "And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever."

This peace is a fruit of the renovated and holy mind. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "To be spiritually-minded is life and peace." "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." Our Saviour was called the "Prince of Peace;" and his advent was heralded by angels, who sung over the plains of Bethlehem and in the wondering shepherds' ears, "On

earth peace, and good will to men." "No weapon," said God by the mouth of his prophet to his church, "that is formed against thee shall prosper." "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I gather thee." "And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those; the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any venomous beast shall go up thereon; it shall not be found there, but the righteous shall walk therein. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

"Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting and destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls salvation and thy gates praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

Such are the testimonies of the Scriptures as

to the effect of righteousness upon the soul, in conferring peace. The way of holiness is the way of peace. Here it is that "mercy and truth have met together, and righteousness and peace have kissed each other." The sinner, conscious of his moral ruin, and disturbed by anxious fears, comes to Jesus Christ, and through him enters the way of holy obedience, and then all his guilty fears depart. He reaches not a state of innocence, but of forgiveness, and this has the same effect as innocence in conferring peace. He now discovers that those sins which once troubled him, have been borne by the Saviour on the cross, and that, for the sake of the atoning sacrifice, they may be forgiven; and here, in Jesus Christ, is laid the foundation of his peace. Coming to Jesus by faith, he is introduced into the divine friendship. His soul through faith recovers the great element of obedience, which was lost in the apostasy, and he presses on towards heaven, renewed and happy.

Behold him now in the King's highway, advancing towards the celestial city. He is assured that God is with him. Narrow and difficult as may be the path, yet he advances with a determined spirit, and is calm and joyful amid his trials. He finds the yoke of Christ easy, and his burden light. There may be hills to climb, valleys to descend, and the path of

humiliation to be trodden; there may be sore conflicts with the adversary, and trials severe and terrible to be endured; yet, amid these storms, there is peace. If evils afflict him, yet there are times when he may stand upon the delectable mountain, and gain a view of the distant city, the New Jerusalem, his everlasting rest. He may trace the narrow path of life descending into the vales and rising over the hills, till at length the faint and almost indistinguishable glory which illumines its termination, and where it rises to the celestial abode of the saints, meets his eye, and kindles in his heart renewed emotions of joy.

You, who are living to the world, may court its pleasures as the means of happiness; you may join in the dance and delight in sensual gratifications, loving mirth and wine, as the chief sources of your enjoyment; but you forget the sting which these things leave behind. At the best, these pleasures are unsatisfying; and, though oft repeated, occasion only fresh pangs of conscience. Nor do they confer on the immortal mind one element of real good. One hour of that peace which springs from the assurance of God's eternal love, more than outweighs them all. If there is a giant Despair and his gloomy prison, yet he is not to be feared by one who keeps in the King's

highway. He can be encountered only by turning from it. There are no such dangers to be feared by one who maintains a holy walk with God. And, before the Christian shall reach the termination of his journey, he shall enter the land of Beulah, that beautiful country, where the light never grows dim, where fruits and flowers abound, where there is to be enjoyed a foretaste of the celestial Paradise, and where the saints on earth refresh themselves, preparing to cross the deep river of Death.

Rich are the blessings which are included in the gracious promises of the Bible. With them contrast the blessings which the world confers, and learn how small and insignificant these are. You may be dazzled by the world. Wealth may excite earnest desires. You may long for riches as the means of happiness. But view the man who, by unremitted efforts, has amassed a large estate. He has worn himself out in doing it. He is now old. He is incapable of enjoying the wealth which he has accumulated, and knows not the luxury of using it to make others happy, or in doing good. His children live only to enjoy his riches, waiting impatiently for the old man's death. He sees, in fancy, his estate squandered, and strives to prevent it by the provisions of his will. But he can thus secure it only for one or two generations.

He now wakes up to the importance of doing something effectual for his own happiness. He builds himself a magnificent house, lavishing thousands upon it; and when he has completed it, dies. This is the fatal termination of his career. How different is his condition from that of the poorest Christian who has ever left this world for glory! He has no consolation in death, no hope. But the Christian is sustained and comforted by the promises of God, which come like celestial music to his soul. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." Precious promise! How blessed is it to die with such rich assurance of God's almighty protection in that hour!

Would you enjoy this blessing? Come, then, and walk with the Christian in the way of peace. It is a bright, a blessed way. Those who walk in it have joys which no man taketh from them. It is a way that conducts them to the pure and healthful abode of all who love God. And when you shall have reached that place of rest, your trials will be over; you will have entered a world from whence sorrow and sighing shall flee away; and where peace, sweet peace, like that which dwells in the heart of Jesus, shall for ever be yours.

Chapter Thirteenth.

DANGERS IN THE WAY.

It is natural to one who has found the way of peace, and begun to walk in it, to feel that his trials are over, when he has but just set out on the Christian pilgrimage. Instead of having escaped the temptations of the world, he has only begun to meet them on the field of battle. There are hindrances to the enjoyment of continued peace, and dangers, against which it is important carefully to guard.

One class of hindrances to the Christian's peace springs from the necessary connection of the body with the soul. It is useless to wander to a distance in search of the causes of spiritual darkness, when they exist in their full strength at home. It is natural that the body, which, up to the period of conversion, has been the servant of sin, should furnish the greatest of all obstacles to a truly spiritual and devoted mind; the spiritual change in the soul is not attended with a corresponding change in the body. This continues the same, and is only gradually affected

by the constant influence which the spiritual mind exerts, to control its appetites and passions.

Could the body, in conversion, be as suddenly changed as is the soul, and correspond in its nature with the renovated affections, it would secure to the Christian many advantages, and remove much of the danger which attends his future progress in the way of peace. The Christian's warfare is to be waged with his own corrupt and sinful propensities; and if there were no body to be kept under, and no pernicious habits to be overcome, the conflict would be comparatively light. But no sooner does one who has found peace come to appreciate the excellency of divine things, and long for complete conformity to God; no sooner does he think that all his spiritual enemies are slain, and that his course henceforward is one of joy at the triumph he has attained, than he begins to find that his soul, with its spiritual affections, which would soar to God, is imprisoned in a corrupt and sinful body; so that he is compelled with Paul to say, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

God, through the Gospel, has made provision for the conversion and sanctification of the soul; and, through the grave, for the complete purification of the body; that the body and soul, united at the resurrection, may be fitted for endless

enjoyment in the world of glory and blessedness. But, here, the Christian must bear around with him the body, whose tendencies are to corruption. And he must fight against these corruptions, ever struggling, and pressing onward, till he shall overcome and triumph in victory.

One accustomed to the use of intoxicating drink, purposing to abandon it, may find peace in believing; his affections may rise supremely to God. But his old habits have produced such an impression on the body, and have occasioned such an adaptation of it to his lusts, as to have fastened on it those tendencies which give power to temptation, even after conversion, and render a firm resistance necessary to a successful conflict.

There are other habits of a sensual kind, which are of like nature. These sometimes become so strong as to demand a direct conflict, tending as they do to check the progress of the mind in holiness, and to destroy its spirituality. One great disadvantage respecting them is, that they have their seat in the man, and he bears them about with him wherever he goes. He cannot flee from them, for they dwell within. His only safe course is to resist them, and to form new and holy habits in the place of those which are sinful; and thus gradually to conform

the body to the purified and holy desires of the soul.

The lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, all have an intimate relation to the body, springing as they do from its unholy influence. When the heart is changed, therefore, its spiritual affections are brought into conflict with prevailing sinful habits, and are compelled to resist them. Many of the temptations of the Christian, and hindrances to his spiritual advancement, spring from this source. The youthful Christian thinks his difficulties are at an end, when he has but just begun to encounter them. He does not dream of the trials which are before him. He thinks that his heart, purified, will insure complete sanctification; but does not know that this sanctification is only reached at the end of a desperate struggle.

Most painful it is to one converted, to discover that the tendencies to sin are yet active, when he had thought them slain. Here it is that the first doubts arise of his own conversion. He finds these tendencies within, and unable to explain them in accordance with the fact of his conversion, he begins to doubt; nor is it till he finds that in spite of them his mind still cleaves to spiritual things, that he ventures to conclude that he is a Christian.

The only way to preserve his inward peace

is to meet these tendencies in the spirit of one who is determined to conquer them or die; and to establish habits which God will approve, in place of those which are sinful. Nothing is so important as for a young Christian to start right. If he lay the axe at the root of these sinful tendencies, and do not allow them to grow and gain the ascendency, then his course in life will be peaceful and happy. He will walk in the light of God's countenance, and go on his way to the end of his journey, an active, useful, and joyful Christian. But if he only check them for the present, and dally with the work of extermination, they will spring up afresh, and will be thorns in his pathway, to give him many a painful wound, if not a fall. When God introduced the Israelites to the promised land, he commanded them utterly to drive out the heathen. But they were so glad to find a place of rest, and it required so much self-sacrifice to obey the Lord, that they did not wholly drive them out; and, in consequence of this neglect, they suffered grievous temptations, and finally lost their privileges. So it is with the sinful tendencies of the body, if they are not at first subdued. They will spring up in their full strength at times when the Christian is not prepared to encounter them, and will often involve his soul in spiritual darkness.

It sometimes happens that one who means to be holy will reserve some liberty inconsistent with perfect obedience; thus compromising principle for the sake of his own gratification. He leaves this door open for Satan to creep in and gain possession of his heart; and is in imminent danger of thus casting himself away. He goes on in life, sinning and repenting till his moral affections are disordered beyond the power of recovery, and he is ready to long for death to come and terminate his miseries.

This is one of the chief sources of darkness and of apostasy. Often through the power of its remaining corruption does the soul mourn the hiding of God's countenance and the loss of its peace. The Christian aims to press on his way, but many are his haltings, many his sorrows and tears, occasioned by his own neglect. When he would rise and commune with God, his thoughts are pulled back to earth; when he would do good, evil is present with him. Class all other sources of spiritual declension together, and they do not exert so pernicious an influence upon the Christian, to destroy his inward peace, and induce spiritual darkness, as do these. Other sources of temptation are without, but these are within; others may be escaped, but these cling to the man, dwell in his body, fasten on his soul, and are never separatd from him for one

moment. It is indispensable to spiritual peace, therefore, that the young Christian should make a right beginning, and not only consecrate his soul to God, but aim to make his body a temple of the Holy Ghost.

The allurements of the world constitute a source of danger to the Christian, and against them he must sedulously guard, if he would continue in the enjoyment of peace. These make their appeal to the appetites and passions of the mind, and will prove successful in proportion to the hold which they are enabled to gain upon it. If the soul is in a state of elevated spiritual affection, and holy habits are strengthening there and sinful ones declining, worldly allurements will produce but a slight impression. But if the mind has already yielded to its sinful tendencies, if its communion with God is obstructed, and its spirituality has declined, then these allurements are in danger of making a strong appeal, and for a time leading off the soul into captivity.

Worldly allurements are regarded and treated very differently when the soul is in a high state of religious culture, and its spiritual affections are elevated as in a revival of religion. It requires little effort then to persuade a Christian, who is eminent for his piety, and lives in communion with his Maker, to abstain from the ball-room, the midnight revel, and the haunts of

vice, where the name of God is blasphemed, and sin reigns, holding its captives in complete and willing subjection to its thraldom. But it would not require much effort to persuade a man of the world, whose affections are enlisted in such pleasures, to seek their enjoyment. Nor would it be very difficult to induce a sensual and apostate Christian to join in such amusements. And there are some who wish to serve God, and the general habit of whose mind is to obey him, who, from dallying with the corrupt and sinful tendencies of their nature, are in such a state of mind that these allurements press upon them with great power, and are difficult to be resisted.

A disposition to yield to worldly allurements is not evidence of a spiritual mind, but the reverse; and when one finds his heart inclining after worldly things, which he knows will not please God, he has reason to believe that all is not right within. It is preposterous to think that he can thus yield to the world, and yet enjoy peace. The only rule by which his peace can be preserved, is to do nothing but that which is pleasing to God, and fitted to advance the soul in holiness. Wherever there is a hankering after those worldly pleasures which others pursue, and an occasional indulgence in them, it is an indication that the sinful tendencies of the mind are not yet overcome, that the

body still endangers the spirit; and that it will not be long before that individual, unless brought to repentance and to change his course in life, will adhere to the formalities of religion, while his heart goeth after covetousness, or wholly abandon his religious profession.

Yielding to worldly amusements casts an obstacle to the enjoyment of peace directly into the path, creating hindrances to advancement in the divine life which are many and great. What association have the worldly pleasures of the gay with the spirit of prayer and true devotion? And do not Christians often, by pursuing these pleasures, bring themselves into a state of spiritual darkness, and banish peace from their souls? The proper distinction between rational amusements consistent with true piety, and those of an opposite character, is, that whatever tends to interrupt the spiritual communion of the soul with God, or to encourage that which is sinful, ought never to be done. Whatever tends to produce thoughtlessness of spiritual things, and to encourage a neglect of them; whatever tends to foster the corrupt tendencies of our nature, instead of promoting our perfect obedience to God, is injurious, and should be at once abandoned. The way to meet the allurements of the world is, for the Christian to plant his foot firmly within the line of what

he knows that God will be pleased with, and there to stand with the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation, contending manfully to the last against all the unholy influences which beset him.

Another class of hindrances to peace arises from worldly business. Before conversion, man lives to himself only. He seeks his own worldly advancement, and brings everything he can to bear on this alone. He does not inquire so much, what is pleasing to God, as what will soonest enrich himself. Habits of business are acquired, which are inconsistent with a supreme regard of Jehovah and the strict observance of his law. And these it is exceedingly difficult to overcome. There are various species of petty dishonesty esteemed and practised by men which cannot stand the test of holy principle, and must be abandoned. There is danger that these will assume a sway over the converted mind, and that many of the habits created during a life of impenitence, will thoughtlessly be permitted to remain, to the destruction of true piety.

A like danger arises from the way that business is pursued, and the neglect of spiritual duties to which it gives rise. One who is driven by his business, from his first waking moments till night, will not find time to read his Bible; and, if he continue this course, will be liable to

have his old habits control his religion, instead of his religion control his habits. One who has men in his employment, and who feels that every moment they abstain from labor will damage his business, is under a temptation, even when he has become a Christian, to hurry his hands off to work without prayer. From the force of long habit he is in danger, even after conversion, of pursuing the same course.

The like danger threatens those who receive employment. They are exposed to neglect their religious duties, and hasten to their work before they lift their hearts to God in prayer. From the mode of conducting business, therefore, arise temptations to neglect the spiritual duties of religion, which often prove a serious detriment to the peace of the soul. Religion is thus reduced to a point of secondary importance, in the estimate of the mind.

Misfortunes in business not unfrequently drive the Christian from the source of his strength, and bring his soul into spiritual darkness. Those who are unfortunate feel that they must repair their losses, and they rush with renovated zeal into business, casting aside every other consideration. Then darkness ensues. It is impossible for one thus influenced to rise to a high state of religious enjoyment, or even preserve his peace. The only course to be pursued, if he would avoid the

danger, is to subject all his worldly concerns to his religious duties, and bring them into subordination to the supreme love of God. The business of life must all be arranged with reference to Christian duty, and if it is not, the soul will be inevitably robbed of its peace.

Another class of hindrances, tending to the destruction of peace, springs from the influence of evil associates. It does not follow that because one is a professor of religion, it is safe to come under his influence; for there are some in the church whose influence is more pernicious, and does more to destroy the power of spiritual religion on the heart, than all other influences combined. There are professors of religion everywhere to be met, whom none can associate with, without endangering their piety. One needs to be very careful with whom he mingles, and what kind of influence he puts himself under. He should choose such companions as may promote his spiritual growth and his active usefulness; not such as will prove like dead weights upon his piety, to drag it down and destroy its activity. For it is extremely difficult to recover one's self from the power of evil associations.

Another class of hindrances arises from a failure to assume the duties of the Christian at the time when peace was found. This is a source of temptation and spiritual darkness. If the

Christian fail to establish holy habits in place of those which are sinful; if he fail to set apart and sacredly to observe stated periods of devotion; if, as the head of a family, one fail to set up the domestic altar; or, if business men fail to control their business in accordance with their duties to God, this failure cannot but exert a most pernicious influence. So, also, a failure to continue a course of Christian duty well commenced, is attended with like difficulty.

No sooner does one begin to walk in the way of peace, than he is encompassed with these and a thousand other dangers. Temptations from within and from without beset him. The world presses its objects of allurement upon his heart. He is exposed to wander, to forsake the way of peace, and lose his enjoyment in religion. Not that he is compelled by circumstances above control to do this, but he is thus tempted. All his danger arises from his yielding to such temptations. If he resist them and live near to God, he may ever live in the blessedness of peace; if he yield to them, he will bring wretchedness upon himself. Peace will forsake him, and a horror of thick darkness will overspread his soul.

Chapter Fourteenth.

SPIRITUAL DARKNESS.

The light of religion, like that of the natural sun, may sometimes be overcast with clouds. There are few bearing the Christian name who do not know, by their experience, the power of spiritual darkness. While those who deceive themselves may be filled with joy, and have none of the peculiar temptations and difficulties of the true Christian, he may be oppressed with distressing fears, may have the sunlight of his joys beclouded with gloom, and may be almost ready to abandon his religious hope. Less conscientious and more confident, the self-deceived are ignorant of their spiritual state, and float down the stream of life untroubled by their sins, and ever sure of their salvation; while the Christian is compelled to put forth vigorous and self-denying efforts to maintain his faith, and to preserve his position upon the rock.

The Christian may come into a state of mind which may be properly compared to darkness. The prophet alludes to this when he speaks of

those "who walk in darkness and have no light." By this it is meant, that they are deprived of the sensible presence of God, lose the comforts of religion, are shorn of their Christian strength, and oppressed with gloom. They are deprived of that sensible nearness to God, once the source of joy, and that consciousness of his presence which imparted peace. In this state, the light of the believer's spiritual hope is obscured, but not extinguished. God seems to have withdrawn himself, as in the case of Job, who exclaimed, "O that I were as in months past, in the days when God preserved me, when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness." So also the prophet said: "For these things I weep; mine eyes run down with water, because the Comforter who should relieve my soul is far from me."

Bunyan describes Christian as oppressed with spiritual darkness, when passing through the valley of the shadow of death, in the dungeon of Doubting Castle, and when sinking in the river. And similar disquietude is the portion of every true believer who wanders from God. When he starts in the Christian way, he resembles a traveller, on a pleasant morning, under bright skies, nature being attired in her most attractive dress, and presenting, on every side, objects of pleas-

ing interest. The air is mild, the world seems to hymn the praises of its great Creator, and he presses on his way with a delight that knows no alloy. But he is an inexperienced traveller who does not know that there are hills to be climbed, valleys to be descended, streams to be crossed, devious paths to be shunned; and that, as night advances, it is often difficult to avoid losing the road, through the multitude of crossings; or who does not know that the bright sun may soon be obscured, that clouds may pile themselves in clouds in majestic grandeur, till they shall darken the vision, and shed a thickening gloom on the face of nature; and that, when nothing of the kind had been anticipated, they may pour forth their fury in driving rain, or hail, or snow, against the weary pilgrim, till he shall pant for repose, and look with eager gaze for the evidence that he is approaching some place of rest and shelter.

So it is with the Christian. When he first experiences the joy of forgiveness, he feels a love for Christ and his religion, and seems to think that the joy which this love awakens can never become impaired. Like Bunyan's pilgrim, when his burden was loosed from his shoulders, and had rolled till it tumbled into the sepulchre of Christ, so the Christian exults in the

glories of his Redeemer, and his lips are vocal with his praises. He starts on the way to the celestial city, and thinks only of pressing onward. But he now makes the discovery that his heart is not perfectly free from sin, that temptations surround him, that the love of the world is not yet slain from his breast, and that when he expected to triumph, he is still obliged to fight. Many and wearisome are the Christian's conflicts, severe are his disappointments, deep his trials. So that, in the end, he is often like a shipwrecked mariner who has been driven ashore on a plank and crawled up from the dashing tide, to stand in security upon a rock; and who, in casting his eye back over the scene of his perils, can discover none of his companions who started with him on the voyage, for all have been buried in the depths of the mighty ocean, while he alone has escaped.

There are clouds, and storms, and tempests, to which the Christian is exposed on the voyage of life; there is darkness which settles down upon him, from which he sees no means of deliverance; and it is not surprising that he should hail with joy, as he often does, that rest which remaineth for the people of God, where he may lay aside his wet garments, divest himself of his torn and soiled apparel, that he may be clad in

new raiment, pure and white, and enjoy the luxury of feeling that he has at length reached his home.

The loss of God's presence to the Christian is attended with the loss of spiritual peace. It is accompanied with depression and gloom, instead of joy. He then walks in darkness, and is in constant danger. He cannot confide in God, as he was wont to do, nor go forward in the discharge of his Christian duty. He has lost all heart, and is shorn of his strength as was Sampson in the lap of Delilah. He has no spiritual comfort. There is midnight in his soul. Peace is gone.

This darkness may arise from different causes, which it is important to examine. One common source of spiritual darkness is derangement of the body, in which the functions natural to health are impaired. This is often the source of religious melancholy in those who have no suspicion of their state. The mind and body are so associated that the one sympathizes with the other. Persons affected with nervous disorders become inclined to religious gloom; and, through the force of disease which is uncontrollable, ever look on the dark side. Prayer presently becomes burdensome, because they find no comfort in it; and hope in the soul waxes feeble, if not altogether expires. The

most intense mental sufferings are often occasioned by impaired health. And those who give the brightest evidence of religion, seem to themselves to be involved in the most dreadful gloom.

But a more common source of spiritual darkness is worldly trouble, produced through too great haste to become rich. There is a grasping of the world, and an anxiety to attain wealth speedily, which influences the minds of thousands; and Christians not unfrequently fall into this vortex. Discontented with remunerating gains, they seek to increase them to an unreasonable extent, and, from doing a comfortable and safe business, they extend their operations and enlarge their trade, as if disposed to use every facility, regardless of risk. The burden they thus assume becomes a constant source of anxiety. They must borrow money, and bring in their friends as indorsers; they must part with their business notes at a ruinous discount; they must bargain for and solicit favors; they must turn every way, and take advantage of every circumstance; and, after the greatest anxieties and struggles, frequently fail.

There was one possessed of affluence, of commanding position in society, a princely merchant, and a devoted Christian. He became largely involved, with the certain prospect in

view, as he thought, of immense gains, but was suddenly compelled to suspend payment. A friend called to see him. "Sir," said he to that friend, "I am a lame duck. It is possible to retrieve my affairs, but I think I am a lame duck. It depends on a contingency. If cotton should rise a quarter of a cent on a pound, I can save myself; if it shall fall, I am ruined." It fell; and this man, so respected, wealthy, and liberal, and so exemplary as a Christian, was instantly shorn of wealth, reputation, and Christian character.

And what are we to think of those who, after successive years of prosperity, find themselves, in a single day, bankrupt through some unfortunate speculation? Instead of being fixed in a station of ease and affluence, they are reduced to poverty, their palaces crumble away, their estates pass into other hands, and they are not unfrequently glad to obtain a subordinate position in that business which they once commanded. The man who was worth a million has been known to take his place, as clerk, behind the desk, in the establishment which once owned him as master.

What is the natural effect of these worldly troubles upon the Christian? In the final result, they may conduce to his spiritual good; but, during the process of trial, and under the

pressure of such unbounded anxieties and cares, the soul can have but little enjoyment in religion. Religious responsibilities are neglected, the active duties of the Christian life relinquished, and clouds and thick darkness overspread the mind.

Or God may remove his presence from his people in order to make trial of their faith, as in the case described by Isaiah when he says, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee; in a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee."

But spiritual darkness is usually the result of sin. He who commenced the Christian life, carefully fulfilling its various duties, presently relinquishes some of them. Under the pressure of worldly cares, the duties of the closet are neglected. The heart becomes estranged from God, subject to temptation. The Christian is enticed over on to the enemies' ground, and is led to act from worldly motives, thinking his interest in religion will never wane. Then he becomes absorbed in the world, and its spirit reigns within him. Sensuality and selfishness receive encouragement, and betray him to the wicked one; and then his light goes out. A dark cloud rises in the firmament of his soul. He sees

nothing as he ought, and feels no more the spiritual emotions which once imparted joy. One sin, presumptuously committed, or a single departure from duty, unrepented of, may induce consequences the most deplorable as it respects his future course. It may involve him in deep gloom, and exert a melancholy influence on his whole Christian character.

In all such cases, it is not from any deficiency in God, but through his own neglect to watch and pray, that the Christian yields to temptation, and causes God to withdraw from him the light of his countenance; and, instead of pressing on the way like a traveller in a pleasant day, under bright skies and on a plain road, he goes groping on in the dark, sometimes plunging into a quagmire, turning from the road into the entangled laurels, stumbling over logs, or chasing the ignis fatuus, and in constant danger of perishing amid the gloom which enshrouds him.

The neglect to be active in doing good, has a tendency to involve the soul in darkness. Christ demands the active services of his disciples; and, if they fail to interest themselves in the objects which interest him, they neglect the means necessary to give expansion to their piety, and cultivation to their Christian graces. And then darkness fills their minds. Temp-

tations and sins trouble them. They forsake the path of obedience, and their peace is gone.

In such circumstances, how is one to recover his spiritual enjoyment and dispel the gloomy cloud? He is to estimate, in the best way he can, the cause of his spiritual declension. If it spring from infirmity of health, he is to seek a restoration of health; if from known sin, he is to repent of that sin, and renew his covenant engagement to be the Lord's; if from a failure to be actively useful, he is to engage in the work of doing good. From whatsoever cause this darkness may arise, he is not to sit down in despair, nor to think that tears and promises will atone for past unfaithfulness. But he is to cast himself by faith on God, and go forward in his strength to do his holy will.

As he first came to God, through a Saviour, to obtain pardon and reconciliation, so must he come now. And having gained a consciousness of sins forgiven, he must aim so to cultivate his faith and dependence on God, that it will seem to him like taking hold of his Father's hand, to be guided by it along the path of peace. He must, in all respects, act in accordance with his duty. He must be faithful in prayer, and seek to renew the communication of his soul with heaven. He must live in accord-

ance with the principles which he professes; must engage in active usefulness; must break off every sin, and assume the performance of every duty; and, in proportion as he shall come more and more under the guidance of holy influences, will the light be restored to his soul.

There is a tendency in Christians to be governed too much by their feelings, and too little by holy principle. When a cloud comes over them, they are ready to abandon their duty. They feel that they cannot perform acts of usefulness. They do not feel right, and hence they turn from the path of holy obedience, and lose their peace. In such a case, the only consistent way is to exercise an unshaken faith in God, and to go forward without remission in the discharge of every Christian duty. It is preposterous, because one's case is bad, to pursue the direct method to make it worse, neglecting the only means of safety. When the sky is overcast, and the mariner can take no observation from the heavenly bodies, he watches his chronometer the more intensely, throws his log with more care, examines his compass, and strives with greater accuracy to estimate his course and distance; or, if approaching the coast, he carries less sail, and continually heaves his lead to ascertain his soundings, confident that the clouds will not always last, and that the glori-

ous sun will soon shine out and reveal to him his true position on the ocean. So, in the midst of spiritual darkness, the Christian is to trust in God, and to take his word for his guide, that sure word of promise, "unto which," said Peter, "ye do well to take heed as unto a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the day-star arise in your heart."

How absurd for the mariner, in view of a rising storm, to neglect his sails, desert his helm, and leave his ship to be tossed at the mercy of the waves! On the contrary, the clouds indicating an approaching tempest, naturally tend to waken in him the most intense interest, and excite his activity. If of portentous aspect, he instantly orders all hands aloft, furls the sails, except so much as is necessary to work the ship; and keep it out of the trough of the sea, he closes his hatches, puts in his dead-lights, lashes fast the boats, makes everything snug below, and then, in his oil-cloth coat, with speaking-trumpet in hand, he takes his stand by the helmsman, prepared to issue his orders according to the emergency of the case.

But the Christian mariner, when a cloud rises upon his mind, often pursues exactly the opposite course. He ceases to feel any interest in his voyage, quits the helm, leaves the sails unfurled, goes below, and casts himself, as Jonah did, into

his berth, and falls asleep, regardless of the consequences. He neglects to watch and pray, forsakes the society of Christians, abandons the communion-table, and relinquishes all his religious duties. At the time when the occasion demands his utmost fidelity to the trust reposed in him, he abandons everything in despair.

But this is not the way to pass through darkness unharmed. The danger requires a remedy, and that remedy consists in renewed faith, and devotion to the active duties of the Christian life. Let a consistent, prayerful course be pursued, and the clouds will soon be dispelled. Peace will return to the soul, and the course of the Christian will be like the glorious sun in a cloudless horizon, tinging the face of nature with its mellow light, and sinking to its weary bed in calm and undisturbed repose.

Chapter Fifteenth.

HOW ONE, WHO HAS FOUND THE WAY OF PEACE, MAY PRESERVE THE PURITY AND STRENGTH OF HIS RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS, AND EVER LIVE IN THE BLESSEDNESS OF RELIGION.

No sooner has one found true peace, through an assurance of his divine acceptance, than he discovers himself exposed to danger. He is surrounded by temptations; and it becomes an inquiry of great importance to him, how he can best preserve himself from their fatal influence, maintain a life of piety, and ever live in the repose of peace. Is it necessary that one, who has become a Christian, should lose the light of the divine countenance, neglect God, and plunge his soul into spiritual darkness? So many seem to think, and the remarks of experienced Christians often convey the impression to one just starting in the Christian life, that he must, as a matter of course, become cold and dead in his religious affections, and conform to the very imperfect standard which many in the church set up. But this is a false view of the subject. It is not necessary that the Christian should sink down into

this unhappy state. It is too often that he does; but there is no necessity for it, which he may not overcome. He need not permit his mind to be beclouded, nor his peace to be disturbed. He may live to the end of his journey in the exercise of true piety, and in the continued enjoyment of communion with God.

But yet there is danger that the allurements from without, and the worldly tendencies of a partially sanctified heart, will estrange his affections from God; and that his course in life will be diversified with light and shade, joy and despondency; that he will sometimes stand upon the Delectable Mountains, and, at others, find himself immured in the dungeon of Doubting Castle. But yet it need not be so. If it is, sin occasions it. Not sin in the general sense of falling short in the performance of the duties of religion, but presumptuous sin. Some darling lust has found its way into the heart, to contest with Christ the mastery of the affections; and there is an improper yielding to the enemy.

Christians may often recur, in their thoughts, to the identical sin which has occasioned their loss of peace. They may detect the original cause of the withdrawal of God's favor, and fix on the very spot where they turned aside from the King's highway, and became involved

in transgressions, of hurtful influence, during their whole pilgrimage; as Christian and Hopeful could remember the stile over which they passed, to seek an easier path in the precincts of Doubting Castle. With this, the experience of Christians fully accords. There is many a one who, after a journey of several years as a Christian pilgrim, can look back to the very point where a single dereliction from duty inflicted a serious wound upon his peace, and left him a more inconsistent and infirm Christian than he ever expected to be, when he first set out in the way to heaven. He can now see the bearing of that error on the peace of his soul, and has become conscious of its unhappy influence on himself and others; and, could he live his life over again, he feels that he would carefully guard against it.

Peace is the natural fruit of obedience. Every thing, as it respects the character of this obedience, depends upon the preservation of the heart in the love of God. All the inspiring causes of true obedience spring from such a heart. Supreme love to God, reigning there, is the governing principle of all right actions. If the heart be not preserved holy in its affections, it will not be possible to preserve from sin the life. The great effort, therefore, of every Christian

should be, to maintain the purity and strength of his religious affections, as essential to a holy walk with God.

But how may this be done? It is an inquiry which admits of numerous suggestions. These I have included under distinct heads, in several successive chapters. By giving them a careful attention, and putting into practice the lessons of wisdom which they contain, you may secure yourself from apostasy, and have the joy arising from the consciousness of ever pressing onward in the path to heaven. Do not sacrifice the happiness of your Christian life, and its usefulness, by a disregard of those principles which are necessary to its preservation. Examine the ground on which you stand, and proceed in the fear of God, and in dependence on his grace, to act such a part of self-denial and of Christian fortitude, as will bear you safely along your journey, and never, for a moment even, cast a shade upon your path.

Chapter Sixteenth.

COMMUNION WITH GOD, ESSENTIAL TO A LIFE OF PEACE.

All spiritual communication with God is through faith in the sacrifice and intercession of Jesus Christ. It is through faith that the soul is enabled to draw near to him, and to rest upon him with confidence, as upon a kind and gracious parent, who is able and willing to grant every reasonable request. Through that spiritual change which is a fruit of grace, the distrust, which was natural to man as a sinner, has given place to holy confidence. The Christian no more doubts the existence, or the ability of God, than he does of the beings and things with which his senses are daily conversant; but he feels the same assurance of his presence, that he does of that of a friend who is seated by him.

Prayer is the offering of our desires to God. It is not a presentation of words only, but the sincere offering of the heart, in the name of Christ. Many are the forms of prayer offered

to the Deity, as if he would regard sweet intonations of voice, and just emphasis, instead of the humble and fervent requests preferred in faith. Such prayers rise not above the breath which gives them utterance. They are the mere offering of the lips; and they effect no more, than fingering the key of an electric telegraph does, when the wire is broken and communication is suspended. But true prayer, with or without words, is borne upward in faith; and it resembles the electric impulses, when the communication is perfect, transmitting the language of the soul to the auditory nerve of God.

The abiding confidence of the soul in God, and the communication of its requests to him, tend to create a spiritual sympathy, and an interchange of feeling and sentiment, of a pure and exalted kind. The soul becomes conscious, not only of his presence, but of its own acceptance. There is an assurance of this, imparted through these and spiritual communications, which no language can describe. The soul communicates its thoughts and desires to God; and he, in return, imparts his Holy Spirit, wakening in that soul peace and joy. God is felt to be present, and from him are derived grace and strength. Such inward delight does this spiritual communication produce, that the soul is often overpowered with the impression

made upon it, through this spiritual manifestation, and its joy resembles that of heaven.

This communion with God exerts a direct influence upon the affections, to maintain their purity and strength. It is as necessary for the preservation of piety, as bread is for that of life. It strengthens love towards God, by bringing the great object of love directly into view. God thus comes into distinct contemplation; and the discovery of his glorious excellence is fitted to kindle the affections of the heart towards him, as the presence of some loved friend is to inspire a renewal of confidence and love.

The affections are thus purified from every thing gross and sensual. There is nothing in God but what is fitted to awaken the purest love. His glories, discovered to the mind, attract its desires, and bear them away from the polluting objects of the world. These are excluded, and their influence destroyed in the soul, by the supremacy of that love which fixes itself on God. And how can this love be maintained, except by suitable intercourse and communion? How are earthly things, in the estimation of the soul, to assume a subordinate position, unless through the habitual contemplation of things more excellent? As the spiritual affections gather strength, so will the influence

of things earthly and sensual wane. And they will gather strength in proportion as they rise to God, and are brought, by communion, into sympathy with his excellence. The more conversant the soul is with him, the higher and holier will be its spiritual attachment.

But this result is not gained through a mere formal communion. Unless there be spiritual intercourse with God, the prayer which is expressive of it is wholly worthless. But where the soul rises by faith to the discovery of his excellence, and goes forth to him in sincere worship, it becomes imbued with a portion of his spirit. God so presents himself, through faith, to the mind of one who loves him, as to captivate its affections, and fix its wandering desires. He thus, as with a cord of love, draws the soul of the believer to himself.

The desire to please God is maintained in constant activity, by communion with him. One of the petitions of prayer is, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;" and this, if sincere, expresses a request that God's will should be paramount; and that all our affections, thoughts, and volitions should be wholly guided by it. In other words, it is a request that we may make it the chief aim of our life to please him. The same is true of the other petitions: "Lead us not into temptation," "Thy

kingdom come," and "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." These cannot be sincerely preferred to God by any but those who seek to do his will, as the chief aim of their actions. In offering these petitions, the soul assumes its proper state of dependence upon God, seeks conformity to his will, and aims supremely to please him.

Prayer, when sincere, kindles in the soul right feelings towards sin. Prayer will either kill sin, or sin will kill prayer; for it is impossible to preserve communion with Jehovah, and yet love and cherish his enemies. Communion with God brings the soul into a state of holy sympathy with him, so that they think alike, feel alike, and are governed by the same holy principles. It strengthens the hatred of sin which reigns in the converted soul, and guards that soul against the power and influence of temptation. No one can live in habitual disobedience to God, and at the same time in the spirit of prayer. One may continue to call upon God long after he has lost all sense of nearness to him, and when conscious that his words do not express the genuine emotions of his heart. But in such prayer there will be no communion and intercourse with the Deity. This will be interrupted just at the point where sin is chosen. Never can it be restored till repentance insures for-

giveness. No man can live supremely devoted to the world, and at the same time maintain a spirit of prayer, any more than he can be governed at one and the same moment by opposite and conflicting moral principles. Devotion to the one will completely destroy the power and influence of the other. Communion with God will insure a life of peace, but abounding worldliness a life of spiritual wretchedness. No man can live in the enjoyment of true religion unless he live on terms of intimacy with God. Prayer is the spiritual thermometer which enables one to ascertain the degree of warmth or coldness existing in his religious affections. He may thus know whether God is with him. If living in obedience to him, he finds his heart is drawn out towards him in fervency of desire; and if he feel the power of prayer to influence his daily life, it is evidence that he is walking with God, and is in the way of peace. But if his spiritual communion be interrupted, he may know that there is some sin, secret or open, whose guilt rests upon his soul. Then gloomy clouds will gather over him, and peace will give place to disquietude. When sensible of this, never should he rest till that sin be searched out, and repented of.

Above all, prayer secures the powerful agency of God to protect and guide all who trust in him.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." The wisdom, power, and grace of the infinite Jehovah are enlisted in behalf of those who confide in him. He will keep them and guide them into the way in which they should go. Nor has there ever been one who has maintained communion with him, and not experienced his gracious aid. He who attempts to keep himself without prayer, will assuredly fall. But he who relies on the Almighty power, cannot. And there is no inspired direction which contains more practical wisdom, or is more important to be observed by all who would live in the continued enjoyment of religion, than to "trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding; in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Thus, by communion with God, is the Christian strengthened with his might in the inner man. It is this which preserves the soul, imparts to its affections a gracious impulse, and bears it on victorious over the world. It is this which elevates the Christian above the power of temptation, imparts light in darkness, and restores

the once ruined man to the happiness lost through the apostasy. God thus becomes the Christian's bosom friend. No pen can portray the happiness resulting from this intercourse. It is known only by those who have experienced it.

Do you know what it is thus to draw nigh to God in sweet and confidential communion with him? If so, let it be your endeavor ever to live in the enjoyment of his holy presence. In no other way can you preserve your piety in its full strength, or continue in the way of peace. Yield to no temptation to neglect secret prayer, for it is in respect to this duty that the first great error of the Christian is usually committed. Let it be with you a fixed principle never to neglect the closet. If you have just commenced the Christian life, endeavor to begin right, and persevere as you have commenced. Let it be the expression of your desire to God, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Take all that I possess: property, friends, home, and all that renders life pleasant; but O, take not thyself away. Let me rather beg with Lazarus, and die his death, than enjoy all that the world can give, and yet live without thee, cast from thy presence, and deprived of that communion with thee which is the source of my spiritual strength, and of all my joy."

Chapter Seventeenth.

KEEPING THE HEART, NECESSARY TO A HOLY LIFE.

To keep the heart, is to watch over it, carefully guard it from wrong influences, and regulate its affections in accordance with holy principle. It implies that the heart is already right, that by suitable care it may be kept, and that it is a Christian's duty to exercise this vigilance. The heart is the fountain of holy love, and it controls the life. No one can maintain his religious affections in their purity and strength, who does not exercise a sedulous care over his heart, and see that all its affections are conformed to the divine will. "Keep thy heart," says the wise man, "with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

One step necessary for this purpose is, to exert a proper control over our thoughts. We are so constituted, that we can direct our thoughts to any object of preference; and, it is the natural tendency of thinking on such objects, to excite corresponding affections in the mind. Love is kindled by contemplating a pleasing object;

and hatred, by one of an opposite character. The thought of sensual pleasure kindles sensual desires. The mere thinking of it, or calling it up in memory, renews and strengthens the wrong affections.

So uniform is the connection between the thoughts and the affections, that it is impossible to guard the one without properly adjusting the other. Hence the way to guard the heart from worldly temptations, is to control the thoughts. Many appear to think that the spiritual affections will take care of themselves, while they pursue a course of life which directly tends to displace them from the heart. If one should dwell, in his fancy, on scenes of sin; if, through books, pictures, or worldly associates, his thoughts should be directed to those objects which he knows are not pleasing to God, will it not tend to corrupt his heart? Is not this the way in which temptation presents itself to allure the soul from God? At first, the young Christian may rigidly guard his thoughts, turning in disgust from those objects in which he once delighted. But he is in danger of presently relaxing his strict discipline. The sentinel at the door of his mind may sleep or wander from his post, and worldly thoughts creep in, and become his familiar associates. He reads what he would not have read before; he spends his Sab-

baths in a way that conscience does not approve; till, from thinking improperly, he begins to feel improperly. The peculiar interest once felt in religion ceases, and he becomes a backslider. In almost every case, and perhaps without an exception, uncontrolled thoughts exert a chief influence to secure a departure from God.

He that would preserve his spiritual affections in their purity and strength, must carefully guard his thoughts. He must think in a way only that will be pleasing to God. And, in doing this, he may sometimes be summoned to a severe conflict with the wiles of the devil. But he must fight, and not relinquish the struggle, till victory shall crown his triumph.

But the spiritual affections must have presented to them proper objects of love; the mind must have food. And it is an important step towards keeping the heart, to interest its affections in that which is good. If one think himself a Christian, and rely on this presumption, doing nothing to call forth and invigorate his spiritual affections, it will not be long before he discovers the evils attendant on such neglect. Wrong affections are to be dispelled, by cultivating and strengthening those that are right; the love of the world to be diminished, by increasing love to God. And, to keep the heart, it must be interested in those things which tend

to strengthen its holy love. Meditation on the divine character has this tendency. To elevate the thoughts to the divine excellence, and to bring before them God in his glorious perfections, tend to kindle love. So, also, to study the word of God, and to dwell in the thoughts on the plan of redemption, and on this manifestation of Jehovah's love, has a similar tendency.

But meditation alone is not sufficient. The heart must be enlisted, and engage in works of benevolence and mercy, or its spiritual affections will wither and die. A failure here is the source of religious declension. Those who love God do not give sufficient expansion to their benevolence in works of mercy. They seem to think that their spiritual interests will take care of themselves. But it is an error to imagine that the heart will keep itself right amid the worldliness and folly which make their constant appeal to it, while nothing is done to cultivate and strengthen its religious affections. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is, to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, and to keep one's self unspotted from the world." To do good is essential to personal goodness. The heart is to be kept, by fixing its affections on those things which God approves, and doing his holy will. It will be strengthen-

ed in its religious affections made holy through such influences.

A faithful observance of the duties connected with a right heart, has much to do with keeping it. Communion with God must be conducted on principle. It will not do to trust merely to impulse. One must go forward, under the guidance of religious duty, to pray, even when disinclined. In the very act of prayer, he may gain light and feeling, which he could not otherwise have attained. It should be a settled principle with the Christian, always to act in obedience to the call of duty, and never to relinquish a single duty through an indifference felt, at the time, to its performance.

In keeping the heart, it is necessary to check the incipient risings of wrong feeling there, and the first incursion of evil thoughts. Yielding to such feelings fully implants them in the mind. If you would prevent the water from tearing away your dam, you must check the small rill which courses over the embankment at its side. If you fail to do this, the constant wearing of that rill will open a channel for a larger stream, and make such a sluice that it will be impossible to check the onward current. So, if you would not make shipwreck of your religious character, you must check the first tendency to sinful thoughts and desires. If you per-

mit the world to fill your mind, and find more pleasure in its allurements than in God, it will not be long before you discover the fountain of your spiritual affections to be dry. Giving way to little sins, as you may call them, or harboring improper affections, is the beginning of apostasy. One wrong affection indulged makes room for another, till presently the heart is corrupted, and its spiritual affections are borne down and swept away by a rushing tide of evil influences. To keep your heart, therefore, carefully guard against every incursion of evil. Regard nothing wrong, as too small to be overlooked. At every point of his attack, repel the tempter. Resist every worldly allurement, at the same time pressing on in the path of holy obedience.

Nothing tends more to the preservation of right affections, than making it our constant endeavor to please God. If one should ask himself, in respect to every thing he does, whether it will be pleasing to his Father in heaven, and make it his habitual practice to observe this rule, cheerfully acting where he is called to act, and exercising self-denial where this is demanded, he would pursue the way of peace. He would have a guide which could not fail him in the darkest and most trying hour. The more one walks by this rule, the more elevated will be his love. From the habit of consulting the will

of God on every occasion, he will acquire a sympathy with him, which will lead him instinctively to pursue the right, and to avoid the wrong. Thus, by exercising a proper control over the thoughts, by providing suitable food for the soul, by a faithful observance of Christian duties, by checking the first rising of wrong feeling, and by aiming, as the rule of life, supremely to please God, may one keep his heart.

Corrupted by worldly allurements, or evil thoughts, the heart acts on the mind to set it in operation, devising new forms of sin; and the intellect, thus moved, reacts on the affections, to increase the evil. The life naturally corresponds to the state of the affections. In every case of backsliding, this is substantially the process. And, often, motives of pride will cause one to preserve a form of religion, long after he has ceased to feel any special interest in religious duties. Many pursue the direct means to break down the power of divine love in their souls, and then wonder why it is that they feel so little interest in religion. Continuance in the way of peace is to be secured only by the observance of those principles which are brought out to view in first entering it. There is no other path of safety. The heart must not only become right in all who would walk with God, but it must be kept so; and it should be the study of

the Christian thus to keep it. If there occur defection, it inevitably begins in the heart, or quickly affects it. Sooner or later, it enthrones itself in this seat of power, and controls the man.

Take care of your heart, then, as you would guard the castle which contains all that you most prize, and would to the last defend it from every assault. The failure of Christians consists in neglecting to observe this duty. And, in consequence of this neglect, clouds darken their horizon and obscure their hopes; and, when they might enjoy the light, they walk in darkness. Every Christian is, by the grace of God, just what he strives to become. He may be a bright and shining Christian, or be ever shrouded in gloom; he may enjoy a sweet and heavenly peace, or be disturbed by guilty fears. As his heart is, so is his life.

Chapter Eighteenth.

THE FORMATION OF CORRECT RELIGIOUS HABITS, INDISPENSABLE TO ELEVATED RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS

HABIT is produced by the customary performance of any action. We are susceptible to the formation of habits. Our physical system naturally adapts itself to that which is customary. The constant use of food, at a certain hour, will create a habit, and awaken at that hour a craving desire for it. The customary use of strong drink will produce a similar effect.

It is equally true of the mind, that a train of thought constantly indulged, will fix itself upon it as a habit. Feelings, continually cherished, will become habitual. Men are often unconscious of their habits. Profanity, when it becomes a custom, passes without notice, because the mind, in this respect, ceases to take cognizance of its own operations. And this forgetfulness is often pleaded in excuse. But the lips are never opened in speech, or the foot or hand moved, without a distinct impulse of the mind, prompting those several actions. The most rapid

motions of the hand, in performing a piece of music, are the result of as many distinct volitions. Else the particular tones of the tune desired would not be produced. The mind conceives what is demanded, and wills that the hand shall touch a particular key, or there would be no tune. It is practice which causes this rapid execution. The mind, through habit, acts with the velocity of lightning. We accord praise to a skilful performer, because he plays well. And, on this principle, ought not the man who swears so habitually as not to notice it, to be condemned? He even selects the company in which to exercise his profanity, and carefully avoids swearing before ladies. And this shows that he is responsible.

He who allows himself indulgence in any known sin, and pursues this course daily, will naturally form a habit. The same is true of good as of evil. Holy habits are as readily formed by those who love God, as are sinful ones by those who do not. That we are susceptible to the formation of habits, and that these, when created, exert such an influence over us, for good or evil, renders it of vast importance to secure in ourselves such as shall be the means of guiding us along the way of peace.

That which lies at the basis of all mental and moral improvement, is a habit of self-govern-

ment. This is the power of control which the mind has over its own operations, to conform them to the guidance of certain just rules. It is the result of mental training. One, through proper carefulness, may acquire the habit of controlling his thoughts, and directing them to good and useful ends. The mind, like a well-appointed mill, whose machinery is in order, and whose movements are regulated by a suitable balance-wheel, may act with precision; or, like an ocean steamer, may be guided by the helm in any direction. Or, its thoughts may be left to wander, and to fix themselves at random on any object presented, guided only by preference and passion. A deranged mind is of this character, all power of responsible control over its own operations being removed. The thoughts rise without order, and shape themselves into a thousand fancies, as the snow, which, when borne by the wind, courses in currents, whirls in eddies, and spreads itself out upon the earth in drifts of every fantastic shape. So the thoughts of a deranged mind are not conformed to any rule, but course through nature, on the currents of passion, and arrange themselves into the most curious fancies. Sometimes, on every subject save one, the mind may preserve its self-control, and be sane. But, so deep and ungovernable may be the feeling on that one subject, as to sway the

reason and the judgment, and bear away the man into the vortex of insanity.

It is the design of our Creator that our minds, with all their operations, shall be held by us under suitable control. We are responsible to him, because we are created with powers which, if properly directed, will enable us to obey his law; and this justifies the subjection to that law, of all our thoughts, desires, and volitions. We are capable of giving direction to our thoughts; and habit enables us to accomplish with ease what would otherwise be difficult. A child finds it difficult, at first, to compose and write down its thoughts. But experience removes the difficulty; custom fixes the habit of combining the thinking with a proper expression of the thoughts on paper; and then the irksome task of the novice becomes easy.

The power of self-control is of immense advantage in respect to the conduct of life. One may acquire the habit of close attention, where his business requires it, and may be a skilful accountant; and yet may suffer his thoughts, in other respects, to rove at random, and follow the lead of his carnal appetites; to be borne by them away from the path of reason and religion. As it respects his business relations to man, his thoughts may be under suitable control; as it respects his relation to God, they

may rove, without any sense in him of moral obligation.

Now, if the thoughts be not held subject to the same moral rule that the actions are, there is danger that all power of control over them, in certain important respects, will be wholly lost. He who assumes that the sins of thought are not wrong, so long as they do not result in open transgression, assumes an untenable position, and one liable to jeopard his peace. It is indispensable, for the sake of the outward conduct, to control the thoughts. And if this duty be properly undertaken, it may become habitual. It should be begun at the commencement of a religious life. No time should be lost, but the mind should at once be disciplined to bring the thoughts and desires under control of the divine law; this may be a difficult task, and occasion a severe trial, on account of the evil habits already formed. These must be displaced by new ones of a different character. When the thoughts have long been accustomed to rove without religious control, and the desires have been borne onward in whirlwinds of passion, it becomes a more serious undertaking than many think, to reduce them to suitable control.

Two courses are open to the young Christian: either to extirpate his sinful habits, and bring the once dominant inclinations into proper sub-

jection; or, to neglect so important a step, and go on sinning, and repenting, to the grave. If he pursue the former course, he acts wisely. He thus gains control of his thoughts, and, by degrees, conquers his evil passions. This is the only safe way. No man can, by a volition, directly control his inclinations, any more than a drunkard can thus extirpate his pernicious appetite. He may will not to drink, and thus gradually and indirectly attain his end. So, to control his sinful propensities, it is necessary for the Christian to direct his thoughts to holy objects, and engage in those high pursuits which will destroy his old inclinations, by awakening new ones in their place.

It is, therefore, by commanding the thoughts, and directing them to spiritual pursuits, fixing them supremely on God, and engaging them in holy duties, that the habit of self-government is acquired. The most inveterate evil habits may thus be eradicated, and the most raging passions controlled. Men, naturally the most passionate in their tempers, and impelled by the strongest inclinations to evil, may bring themselves under proper religious regimen.

Acting on these suggestions, it should be a chief endeavor of the Christian to keep the body under. There is an important meaning ascribed to this expression by the apostle, when he states

it as his endeavor to do thus, lest he should make shipwreck of his faith, and become a castaway. All those animal passions which tend to a violation of God's law, all those evil propensities which arise out of the necessary connection of the soul with the body, must be suitably controlled; and this control must become habitual, to enable the Christian to live in the enjoyment of peace.

On no one point is it necessary, through the formation of right habits, to set up in the mind a more effectual guard, than against "the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life." If good habits are not acquired and maintained in reference to this subject, evil ones are sure to be. Neglect only tends to insure the evil. Habits of an evil tendency naturally grow out of the state of depravity in which the soul has existed up to the moment of conversion. Habits of sin have conformed to them the physical system, so that, after the soul has been regenerated and is changed, the tendencies to sin in the body remain; and it is only by degrees, and through an entire change in the affections and volitions of the mind, that the body adapts itself to the renovated and holy state of the heart.

The drunkard has created a disease in himself by his habit of intemperance, which solicits

the cup, even after the heart is renewed. It is by degrees only that his bodily propensity is overcome, and a healthful state of the physical system induced, corresponding to the new life which he has begun to lead. Now, if one should overlook this, and think that he could continue a moderate indulgence of his appetite, and yet live a Christian, he would only nurture the evil, and husband the means of his own overthrow, through temptation, at some future time. And this principle has a wide and an important application.

To enter on a life of joy and peace, it is necessary to break off all evil habits, and endeavor, by the establishment of holy ones, to bring the physical system into sympathy with the renewed soul, that the body may become the temple of the Holy Ghost. And this is what is meant by keeping the body under. All its carnal inclinations must be subdued; and this can be accomplished by the establishment of those habits which are pleasing to God.

The wisdom of these suggestions no person of experience can doubt. Mark this page. Reflect upon it. Pray over it. It sets forth a principle which is applicable to the whole of life, and which involves, deeply involves the peace and happiness of the soul. If you are wise, begin your Christian life right; maintain

the rectitude in which you commence, and you will avoid a thousand temptations which like waves have dashed the unhappy voyager upon the rocks, to perish there.

An habitual observance of all the duties of religion, at their proper time and in their proper place, is obligatory on the Christian, and is indispensable to the maintenance of his piety. Secret prayer, and family devotion where the relations of life demand it, together with a stated attendance on the worship of the sanctuary, must become habitual with all who would live in the enjoyment of religion. So, also, the study of the Bible, meditation on divine things, and active endeavors to be useful, must habitually receive that attention which they demand. All these duties may, by habit, become delightful, and conduce to the inward peace of the soul; or they may, by neglect, hinder its spiritual advancement, and desolate its religious hopes.

The duties of religion may become easy to one who is disposed to undertake them in a proper manner, and give them his systematic attention; or they may become irksome. And, if one should think that he can preserve his piety and yet neglect the obligations which religion imposes, he will discover, to his sorrow, his mistake. It is only in the habitual discharge of our religious duties, that we can gain the spiritual

good which true obedience imparts, or the peace to which it leads.

Make it a point, in setting out on the Christian life, faithfully to observe all that religion requires of you. The cross may seem heavy at first, but habit will render it easy to be borne. Remember that you cannot begin to neglect the closet without running into temptations which may prove your ruin. But the habit of secret prayer, ever maintained, will secure you against many dangers. This, in connection with a faithful observance of all religious duties, will bear you on, a conqueror, and secure you at last a crown.

Above all, the Christian should establish in himself the habit of looking up to God for his guidance, and of striving to do his holy will in all things. This will prove his security. The shafts of the enemy will fall harmless at his feet, when warded off by the shield of faith. The allurements of the world will fail of their influence. The evil propensities of his own nature will receive a check, and become subdued to the will of God. Sweet peace will ensue.

Make it your solemn purpose, then, to establish those habits which are pleasing to God, and upon which in future you can with pleasure reflect. Every sinful habit abandoned, and holy one gained, is an advantage, and fits the soul,

in the best manner, for renewed struggles with the tempter, till the warfare shall be ended, and the crown of glory, the reward of the victor, shall be set upon his brow.

Chapter Nineteenth.

READING, AMUSEMENTS, AND CONVERSATION, IN THEIR RELATIONS TO SPIRITUAL PEACE.

THE Bible chiefly commands attention as the word of God, and the only guide of life. To study it, should be the daily habit of the Christian. It is not enough hastily to run over a portion of Scripture in the closet, or in the family; nor will this satisfy the spiritual wants of the soul. Some important sentiment of the sacred oracles should be daily contemplated, to impress the mind. This habit of reading the sacred Scriptures should be formed at the beginning of the Christian life, if it have not been before, and be continued. No one can safely neglect this study of God's word. If he do, he neglects a most important means of his own improvement.

Ignorance is the parent of error. Many of the inconsistencies of Christians are to be ascribed to a defective acquaintance with revealed truth. Fickleness naturally results from ignorance. An intelligent Christian is not

readily borne about by every wind of doctrine. His mind is well balanced. He is not led, through the impression of a particular truth vividly presented, to rush into an extreme; or, when temptation assails, to yield to its influence. He does not burn with a fever of religious zeal at one moment, and, the next, chill all around him with his icy coldness. He is familiar with the whole field of truth; with the dangers which encompass him, and the means of his defence. He is strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; and he stands in complete armor, vigilant, and ever ready to meet his subtle foe.

His heart may be right with God, and yet, so defective may be his knowledge, as to expose him to great danger. He may be subject to more vivid emotion than one who is more deeply imbued with Christian knowledge, but he is liable to more sudden changes. This excitement may be counteracted as suddenly as it was awakened, and he may be like "a ship driven of the wind and tossed."

Worldly science and speculative knowledge cannot take the place of that knowledge which is peculiar to the school of Christ. Overlooking this distinction, many repose confidence in their own opinions, when these are essentially erroneous.

A deep and studied acquaintance with divine truth in all its parts will exert an habitual influence over the mind. Instead of hastily skimming over a portion of divine truth, let the Christian, every day, set apart a season for meditation and prayer, deeply imbuing his mind with a portion of revealed truth; let him meditate on the immortality of the soul, its natural danger, the grace of God in the forgiveness of sin, the folly of living to the world, and the importance of devotion to Christ; let him reflect on his duties to his Saviour, the dangers of temptation, his accountability, death, judgment and eternity, and he can not go forth into the world under the impressions thus awakened, without being instructed and influenced by divine truth.

In addition to the Bible, the Christian will find it of great advantage to have some practical work on hand for his perusal, and to read a portion of it every day. This will serve to imbue his mind with the best thoughts, and to guide his meditations.

As to the class of books proper for general reading, there can be no doubt that such as tend to inform the mind, strengthen the understanding, and cultivate the heart, are to be preferred, to the exclusion of others. No book is worthy to be read which is not useful in its

tendency, in one or the other of these respects. Books of information are numerous and valuable. Of such a character are histories, biographies, voyages, travels, and works of science and art. There are many which answer the double purpose of imparting information to the mind and strength to the intellect. And there are works adapted to cultivate the heart. These may be works of real life, or of the imagination; they may relate to plain matters of fact, or be works of poetry and fiction. In this brief enumeration, there is no place reserved for those dreamy romances which, by way of execration, are called novels. There is a vast amount of trash issued from the press which is incapable of exerting on the mind any other than an injurious influence. All those works of imagination which are of an immoral tendency, or which give a false coloring to life, and tend to unsettle the youthful mind, and destroy its love for the acquisition of knowledge, should be wholly and forever discarded. Many there are, who, from a habit of indiscriminate novel reading, are prepared to gormandize whatever of this kind is issued from the press, without any regard to the nature of the work. Destitute of useful knowledge, such as that communicated by works of history, biography, and those which teach the manners and customs of nations, and

also of those which treat of literature and of knowledge, and are indispensable to a good education, they sit, hour after hour, even into the watches of the night, reading those love stories and romances which have no other tendency than to pollute the imagination and corrupt the heart. There are none who waste more precious time, and who are more likely to gather in, from the thoughts, imaginings, and indelicate allusions of vile men who have turned authors, more pernicious sentiments, and a greater amount of moral pollution, than they who read whatever is presented to them in story form, without regard to the character of the works which they thus appropriate. Ladies of delicacy and refinement, who would shrink from an association with the characters described, will yet suffer their minds to be coursed over, and their imaginations to be excited with the portraiture of vice and its pleasures, accompanied by no redeeming feature. The only influence of such injudicious reading is to seduce them from the path of duty to God. Here, the young Christian must guard against the seductive tendency of such productions. They are evil, and only evil, and that continually.

This exclusion, however, should not be extended to all works of imagination and fiction,

for there are many of this class which may be safely and profitably read. The point chiefly to be observed is, that these works inculcate such wholesome truth, and such pure morality and religion, as may tend to enlighten the mind, and properly affect the heart. That Christians must not read works of the imagination, because they are fictitious, is a very incorrect sentiment. If the mind is susceptible of pleasure from a contemplation of the scenery of nature, and is thus elevated in adoring thoughts to God, why may not the same effect be produced by those portraitures of nature conceived by fancy, but founded essentially in fact? If a painting, delineating the evils of vice, by portraying them to the eye, may be viewed with profit, why may not a moral painting, addressed by fancy to the mind, accomplish the same beneficial end? Our Saviour thus instructed his auditors. He narrated interesting stories for this purpose. Some of his most beautiful presentations of truth are moral paintings, or works of fiction, adapted to illustrate the sentiments of religion. And if our Saviour pursued this course, grounding his practice on a knowledge of human nature, it does not become us to adjudge his wisdom to be folly, by casting aside, as of dangerous tendency, all works founded on the same principle. The only

important consideration is, to ascertain whether these works are of a correct moral and religious tendency.

But here arises a practical difficulty. Some works are mainly right, but contain some things objectionable; for imperfection characterizes all human productions. What, in this case, must we do? It is, to make such a selection for ourselves and others, as best accords with the principles above stated; and to learn, in respect to reading, as we are compelled to do in respect to our associates in life, to discriminate the good from the bad. Milton has given a grand delineation, and presented to our view an exquisite moral painting, in his Paradise Lost. It is wholly a work of imagination, separate from the few great facts on which it is based. Cowper has given us the most delightful moral sentiments, interwoven with garlands of fancy. Bunyan has produced a fictitious work of surprising interest, which will be read so long as the world shall stand. De Foe has made use of fiction to impart many valuable and instructive lessons. And other authors have done a noble service to the cause of virtue and religion, by interesting the youthful mind through tales of surpassing beauty, whose only tendency is good. These must be distinguished from other writings of a debasing tendency, the productions of irreligious

persons, who, in their works, are regardless of all correct moral and religious impressions.

It is necessary that Christians, both young and old, should have a just view of the class of books which it is profitable for them to read. In all these particulars, the rule which is to guide us is, to know the character of the works we are about to read, and to feed our minds with nothing but that which shall be morally healthful.

The same rule, substantially, is applicable to our amusements. There are many things which, in themselves considered, are neither holy nor sinful, but possess a character in accordance with the use made of them. Hunger, as a natural appetite, partakes of no moral character, nor does its proper gratification. But, if we should receive food for the express purpose of gaining strength to commit murder, it would be sinful. To be done right, all that we do must be done from a proper motive. We are to do all to the glory of God. This fixes the line of demarcation between those amusements which are proper for the Christian, and those which are not.

That which, in itself, is not wrong, may yet become so through its attendant circumstances and necessary associations. The motion of the limbs in dancing is in itself innocent; and yet, such are the evils attendant on this amusement,

and such the injurious influences of balls and midnight revels, as to cast the practice into the shade, and exclude it, as unworthy of those who would grow in grace, and enjoy a life of communion with God, and of peace.

Cards, dice, and billiards, from their necessary associations and tendencies, ought not to become the amusements of the Christian who values his own happiness; and the parent, who should train up his children to become proficients in these games, would be the means of ruining his own peace, and bringing down his gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. Familiarity with these things, and even a knowledge of them, exposes one to the wiles of the tempter, and tends to the ruin of his Christian influence.

But the same objection does not lie against a game of ball in the open air, which is conducive to health and vigor in the young. It does not lie against such games of skill and science as are not used for evil purposes. These, if properly conducted, may render home attractive, and preserve the young from bad associations abroad. The game of chess may stand as the representative of this class. It is wholly a game of science, and it exercises the mind as usefully as does the study of the mathematics. No objection lies against this game, provided that time is not squandered in it which might be more usefully

employed. The mind needs relaxation from severe study; and this is one means of its innocent recreation, which none can condemn. The rule, however, as to the extent to which such amusements may be carried, is one which respects the value of our time. If it may be more usefully spent, and in a way more beneficial to ourselves, and pleasing to God, then that should have the preference.

There are two ways for Christian parents in which to train their children. One is, to shut them out from the world, sternly prohibiting every playful feeling, severing them from social enjoyments, proscribing every work of the imagination as a pernicious novel, forbidding them their innocent pleasures, and thus preparing them to fall into temptation, when they come to mingle with the world, and shall have escaped from parental restraint; the other is, to allow them innocent and rational amusements, to make home pleasant, and permit them to mingle with the world, at the same time instructing them to discriminate the evil and the good, and to avoid the one and choose the other. The former course will certainly be followed by disastrous results; the latter commends itself as the true wisdom, and is justified as best, by successful experiment.

With respect to social visiting, what is the

Christian's rule? Man is a social being, and was created thus for wise purposes. And there are pleasures which he may enjoy, with advantage to his religious character, and without endangering his peace. Of such a nature are those social interviews where the time is occupied in conversation, and which are conformed to the rules of propriety and religion. It is a great error to put all social parties under the ban, as improper for Christians, if they are confined to that intercourse and communion which are unexceptionable. Nor is it of any consequence how many attend them; for such companies are always separated into little circles for conversation. Nor are such interviews half so injurious to society, as are many of those tea-table circles, where private character is assailed, and subjected to invidious remarks.

If Christian parents are wise, and would keep their children under suitable control, they must make home attractive, and also create for them such proper and rational enjoyments, and such social visiting, as may furnish the young with that intercourse and communion which they naturally seek; and they must take the guidance of this matter into their own hands, or else Satan will take it into his, and spirit their children away into unhallowed gath-

erings in midnight balls and carousals, which can only tend to their injury. In this respect, it must be our aim to please God; and we must act wisely, and with a supreme regard to his revealed will.

In conversation, such habits should be established by all who would preserve their religious affections in a proper state, as are agreeable to the rules of the Gospel. Here we are very liable to fail. It is right, when we mingle with each other in social intercourse, to speak of things interesting and profitable, growing out of the world, and of the events occurring around us, provided nothing be said which is injurious and contrary to Christian love. But Christians are in danger of confining themselves too much to such topics. They should, as Christians, feel it their privilege to speak of the things pertaining to the kingdom of Christ, above every thing else. And yet, it is unbecoming in them to drag religion into conversation, on all occasions, in an ostentatious and assuming way.

The Christian should aim to act naturally, as one of God's children, rejoicing supremely in him; and his speech should be seasoned with grace, thus manifesting the attachment of his heart to things heavenly and divine. And he

should ever aim to acquire such habits of conversation, and intercourse with men, as shall be pleasing to his heavenly Father, and make his own influence, in every respect, what it should be.

Chapter Twentieth.

RIGHT RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATIONS, AND THEIR HAPPY INFLUENCE.

THE mind is naturally susceptible to be influenced by others with whom we mingle, to whose conversation we listen, whose conduct we observe, and to whose opinions we give an attentive ear. Hence, it becomes of great importance for one who would walk in the way of peace, to use circumspection in the choice of his associates.

If we look abroad into society, we cannot fail to discover the ruin brought upon the young in consequence of mingling, on terms of intimacy, with those whose course in life is pernicious. The child at home finds, in the domestic circle, associations of great value. He early learns that piety and happiness are conjoined. He finds encouragement, on every hand, to advance in the path of virtue and religion. The ways of the wicked are unknown to him; nor is he familiar with vice, in any of its forms. But he falls in with one who has been instructed by evil associates, in a different school. He listens

with curious ear to the first lessons of vice, and longs to practise them. He hears others profane the name of God, and sees them desecrate the Sabbath; and his moral principles begin to give way before such ruinous examples.

Soon he arrives at an age when he feels that he must act out the smart young gentleman. He acquires the vicious habit of smoking, and learns to visit places where intoxicating liquors are sold, and to partake of them with his boon companions. Vice at length becomes familiar. He forsakes the guide of his youth, and finds his pleasure in low and grovelling pursuits. From small delinquencies he advances to greater, till by degrees he sinks to the lowest depths.

Who can describe the fatal power which evil associates wield, for the destruction of the young? The world is full of examples illustrative of their injurious influence. And if such associations are fatal to those who are uncontrolled by religious principles, they are proportionally injurious to such as have begun to walk in the way of peace. The young Christian is not likely, at first, to be influenced by those who are gross in their habits. But, where such associations have once existed, and been abandoned, they are in danger of being renewed. Not at once, however, but after the heart shall

have lost, in a measure, the intensity of its first love.

A young man who has found peace in believing, for a time statedly attends the house of prayer. But he has never gone into such society as is the privilege of many with whom he mingles; and, while they have religious associates and pious parents and friends, he has none. All his associations are with persons of a different station in life, and none of them think and feel as he does. This is a most difficult and trying case; and it is one of frequent occurrence. Either he must stand entirely alone, or fall back on associations which are distasteful. Grace may enable him, at first, to maintain a proper standing; but, so soon as his religious affections grow cold, he will be led into some temptation. This is the cause of spiritual defection in many who seemed to start fair in the Christian life. Had they been taken by the hand, and introduced into new associations, they might have been preserved. But they found it difficult to withstand the influences of temptation, when pressed upon them, in their unfortunate associations.

Perhaps this trial is still more severe, as it affects the young female. She has come forward, with others, and professed Christ; but

having come from a different circle in life, has no association with those who mingle with her in religious meetings. Her companions are unconverted. She too may, for a time, stand alone; but she is young, and naturally inclined to society. At first, she cautiously mingles with her old associates. But she feels neglected by the young members of the church, in not being invited with them into the same company. She is mortified and grieved, and turns to those who welcome her back to the world, and try to render her as thoughtless of religion as themselves. And now, the spiritual duties of religion are neglected. New thoughts and desires fill the mind. And thus, through the want of proper religious associates, she is tempted, and wanders far from her religious duty, and from the way of peace.

Right religious associations are as necessary to the mind, as food and clothing are to the body. But, where the wants of the body would readily excite sympathy, those of the mind are treated with chilling neglect. And, as the most lovely flower will soon wither under the chilling blasts, so will the affections of a sensitive mind, under cold neglect. It becomes, therefore, of indispensable importance to those who have begun to walk in the way of peace, to secure right religious associations. Christian love is as

much bound not to neglect for others this necessary want of the soul, as it is to seek their conversion; for it is of equal importance that those who are converted should have proper influences thrown around them to keep them in the way of peace.

Some, in beginning the Christian life, are more favored than others in this respect. But it is a point vital to all who love God, not to mingle in such associations as will tend to impair this love. The young man must make up his mind to be without associates, if he cannot have those of the right kind. He had better live the life of a hermit, than to take a step which will involve him in the loss of peace. And she, who finds herself excluded from the society which she covets, had better live in solitude, than fall away from her religious profession. But this is unnecessary. There never was a consistent Christian of either sex, who has not found friends, and those of an estimable character, by continuing to walk straight on with the people of God. In every case of defection, in consequence of evil associates, the blame rests on the one who departs from Christ.

If it is important for our associates to be true Christians, much more is it in that intimate association formed for life. It is indispensable to our religious happiness, that those whom we

tenderly love, should sympathize with us in respect to those religious feelings and duties which belong to the Christian. He who acts regardless of wisdom in this respect, and forms a connection with a giddy and thoughtless person, whose heart is filled with the world, and who has no regard for religion, will find, when too late, the dreadful influence of such an association on his piety. And she, who yields her affections up to one who is a despiser of religion, and inclined to worldly pleasure only, spreads thorns on her own pillow, and will often receive from them a piercing and painful wound. It is essential to a holy walk with God, that the association which is longest to endure, should be formed on Christian principles.

The principle of association with those who would seek each other's Christian friendship should be, to choose such companions as manifest a desire to live near to Christ, and whose consistent and blameless life may correct the inequalities of our own course, and gently sway us into that which is good. Valuable, indeed, is a Christian friend whose example suggests only right courses of action, and whose words, flowing from a pure and devoted heart, are in accordance with the temper of Jesus. Many a one has wandered from the way of peace for the want of a friend like this. Happy is he who finds

such an one, and goes on with him, as did Christian and Hopeful, in the way to the celestial city.

But it is not every professor of religion who will make a profitable associate. There are different classes of professors in the church, as there are different kinds of fish in the sea. There are disbelieving, doubting, carping, and inconsistent persons enough in every church to justify the truth of our Saviour's parables of the ten virgins, the faithful and unfaithful servants, and the wheat and the tares. And here the young Christian must wisely discriminate, and choose such society as he is conscious will be for his spiritual benefit, and not rashly commit himself to the influence of those whose light is darkness.

If the influence of our associations in life is so great, how earnestly should we seek those that are right, and aim to create a good, instead of a bad influence, by our example! Let those who would make high attainments in religion, and who aim at extended usefulness, be careful of their associations in life. Let them not come into intimate relations with profane and wicked men, nor bind themselves, by secret oaths, to their friendship. I never knew a man who had linked himself with such associates, and highly esteemed the bond of such obligations, who was not lost to the church of Christ, as to any exem-

plary influence. I never knew a man who, if his heart became interested in the good of Zion, and he were eminent for his piety, did not quit such associations, as occasioning a serious hindrance to his religious usefulness. I never knew a man who was so holy, and elevated so far above the power and influence of temptation, that he could enter into intimate relations with the enemies of God, and be sworn to their friendship, without suffering loss in his relations to Christ, and incurring spiritual damage irreparable. And this is the result of experience and observation for many years.

The associations of one who would advance in the way of peace, must be with those who love sacred things. The society which he seeks must resemble that of the saints. Be it your endeavor, then, to make your associations the means of your spiritual improvement, rather than a hindrance to your peace. Prepare yourself, by walking with God, for a blessed association at last with the spirits of the just made perfect.

Chapter Twenty-First.

DOING GOOD AS THE CONSTANT HABIT OF LIFE, THE MEANS OF RELIGIOUS CULTURE.

Among the means by which the Christian may preserve his religious affections in their purity and strength, and live in the enjoyment of peace, there is none of more real importance, than to fix in his mind some good that he will every day strive to do for Christ. Nothing conduces more to the perfection of true piety, than its active development in works of mercy, done as the habit of the Christian's life. The advantages arising from this source to one's religious character, and to his spiritual enjoyment, are many and great. As there is nothing that occasions more hindrances to spiritual advancement, or lays the mind more open to temptation, than the neglect to apply one's self actively to the work of doing good, so there is nothing which contributes more to the preservation of his spirituality, and to his permanent establishment in the way of peace, than an habitual endeavor to be useful. As the limbs, through a proper

training, acquire increased muscular strength, so may the affections be expanded, and strengthened, through culture; this culture may consist in enlisting them in such benevolent acts as will bring them into a unison, in sympathy and feeling, with Jesus Christ.

The affections of the spiritual mind may be right, and yet, if they are not put under proper training, if the means necessary to their growth and fruitfulness be not applied, they will wither, as the grass, from which the rain and dew are withheld, under the rays of a scorching sun. It becomes, therefore, important to illustrate the nature and excellence of that moral training which results from a habit of active usefulness, and its influence on the spiritual affections.

In doing this, and to gain a clear and definite view of it, it is necessary to distinguish this good from our ordinary employment. Many think that they are doing all the good demanded of them, if they pursue their business with energy, and never slacken their efforts daily to increase their wealth. But there is no religion in striving to become rich. Religion reaches down into the heart, to control its motives; and if one, out of supreme love to God, pursue his business, and use the proceeds of it for the great and good ends which the glory of God sets before him, he acts religiously, and is doing good; for

his life is one of devotion to the great end for which he was created. But if he labor simply to hoard his wealth, or to use it in his own sumptuous living, or to maintain an establishment superior to his neighbor, giving for benevolent and religious purposes only a pittance of his gains, there is no religion in this. The squirrel who hoards its peck of nuts in a hollow tree, does only what his necessities require; but he who, beyond the demand of his necessary wants, lives only to hoard, acts in pure selfishness.

It does not therefore follow, that to be industriously employed, is doing good, in the sense appropriate to this expression. If Jesus Christ had not actively devoted himself in works of mercy, but had simply lived to enrich himself, and to live in luxury, it would have never been recorded of him that he went about doing good. The expression indicates something more than a mere selfish devotion to one's own interests. "To do good and to communicate forget not," says the apostle, connecting it with liberality in the bestowal of alms. One may, in a certain sense, be doing good, who provides for his family, and does not leave them dependent on the charities of the world. Industry, for this purpose, is a duty, the neglect of which is a sin, though the observance of it is not a vir-

tue. But this industry may be prompted only by a selfish motive, and this provision extend no further than to one's own. It is as selfish to hoard for one's family as for one'sself; for his family are identified with him. He lays up for them wealth, not out of love to God, but for the respectability and happiness of his household, because it is his. There is no benevolence in industry thus directed.

One may be industrious and frugal, and yet not do good in a scriptural sense. He may lay up for his family, or expend upon his luxurious habits, to make a greater display than others, not withholding those contributions given to benevolent objects, which he bestows to satisfy the clamors of his conscience, or rid himself of importunity; and he may act, in all this, from no higher motive than selfishness. He may pass on through life as one enriched by his own exertions in honest industry, and yet never act out of a motive of love to God, nor, in a single instance, have done good. Not but that he has made himself useful to others, as a water power or mill is useful in a neighborhood; but, while giving employment to others, it was his aim to benefit himself, by making them useful to him. The results of his selfish aim to promote his own interests may be beneficial to the community, but he is not to claim the merit of good-

ness on this account. He acted for himself; nor did supreme love to Christ, and a desire to do others good, prompted by this love, inspire a single action.

He who thus makes himself useful, has no claim to the merit of Christian usefulness. It is not doing good as our Saviour did. It does not tend to cultivate the benevolent affections. It is usefulness such as that one cannot avoid if he conduct his own business wisely; and it is in perfect keeping with entire selfishness. It is not a sacrifice pleasing to God; for pleasing God does not enter into the motive which prompts it.

It does not follow, that one does good who industriously pursues his business, and who makes a good citizen, and a useful man; though to pursue the opposite course, would justly expose him to condemnation. It would be criminal in one to be heedless of life, but it is no merit in him to seek its preservation. It would be base in a parent not to love his child, but no merit to indulge the parental affection. It would deserve reprobation for one not to be industrious, and sustain the good institutions of society, but it is no virtue to do thus. These are among those things which it would be the greatest crime to neglect, but no virtue to regard; because self-preservation, and a desire of

good to one's self, may constitute the only motive of such acts.

There is no true virtue which is not inspired by love to God, as its chief motive. All else is but the fruit of selfishness. One who does not supremely love God, therefore, never does an act from a motive of regard for him. And this is the reason why all those acts which pass for good, and which are useful to others, do not advance the soul in God's favor, because their motive is not a right one.

Those works which are truly good, spring from a higher motive, and are inspired by love to God; consequently, they tend to increase and strengthen that love whenever performed. They are the actings of a truly benevolent spirit, the fruits of divine love, and as such, their performance reacts on the spirit which animated them for its permanent and spiritual good.

This discrimination as to the nature of good works is necessary to solving a mystery respecting them. The unconverted often think that it is by the multiplication of good works, such as prayers and benevolent contributions, they may so improve their hearts, as gradually to grow up into Christians. But it is evident that while they withhold their hearts from God, they do nothing from any other than a selfish motive. And if they should pursue their self-righteous

schemes till death, it would not render them a whit more acceptable to him. And it teaches, that, of the ordinary conduct of life, one can claim only a very small proportion as done from right motives. Sweep away all those acts which have not been done out of a supreme regard for God, and what have you left?

Select out of the heap of your actions the few crumbs of works spiritually good, and lay them by themselves, and you will be ashamed to look upon them. There is many a man of wealth who has labored diligently during life, and whose works, if heaped into a pile, would rise like a mountain, and yet, whose good works, when separated from this mass, would constitute only a few crumbs which a sparrow might swallow without impairing its digestion by a surfeit. Indeed, a small plate of a child's dining-set might contain them all. Think of such an one as presenting himself before God in judgment, and offering upon such a vehicle the fruits of a life professedly spent in his service.

Fix your attention on this point, for it is the key to the secret chamber of the heart. Christians often wonder at the discovery of their want of interest in religion, and at the dearth of spiritual blessings conferred upon the church. They have been engaged in their business, have maintained regular habits of devotion, have

been consistent in the duties of an external profession; but they feel dead in religion, and they know not why. The mystery is solved by the symbol of the sparrow picking up, as crumbs, all their good works, out of the lofty pile of their actions. They have never done enough for Christ to preserve their Christian graces from withering, or to accord with their daily prayer, "thy kingdom come." It is the want of active endeavors to do good, which has withered the beautiful flower of piety, or nipped it in the bud. The spiritual affections have had no water, on the principle that "he that watereth others, shall be watered also himself;" and they have dried up on the stem upon which they had begun to expand in their beauty, leaving the tree fruitless. But had different means been pursued, the Christian would have stood like a fruitful tree in the vineyard of the Lord, his boughs bending under the weight with which they are loaded.

If the young Christian should form the purpose to do some act of mercy or of love towards others, every day; such as to converse with some impenitent person to bring him to the knowledge and love of Christ, and to visit the sick, for the express purpose of doing good to the body and soul of the invalid; to reclaim some wanderer, or to do something of this nature

which requires, in him, a sacrifice of time or money for Christ; and if he should create in himself a habit of such usefulness, it would do more to promote his spiritual advancement, and to elevate his religious affections, than can well be imagined.

The natural effect of such a course of life upon the Christian would be to increase his love to Christ, and to his fellow-men. Love is strengthened by culture, in the same way that the muscles are by use. Acts done from love to Christ, can have no other effect than to enlarge the benevolent affections, and increase their power over the mind. The custom of acting benevolently soon establishes a habit. It is from those who give the most constantly that the largest benefactions are drawn, because their benevolent affections become more expanded and influential by exercise. It is this imitation of Christ, in active endeavors to do good, which brings the soul into a sympathy with his goodness. This is the secret source of their religious eminence, who have lived and labored for Christ. It has grown out of their constant efforts to do good; and here, too, is the secret of their spiritual leanness, who have hardly known whether they were Christians or not, because they have failed in this essential to Christian growth.

Never has the church been more spiritually blessed, than since it has been engaged in efforts for the conversion of the world. These have called into exercise the spiritual affections, and resulted in blessings. This course has reacted on its own piety. It is necessary to call up into action the spirit of true benevolence, and give it proper expansion by the sacrifices we make for Christ, if we would become the most thoroughly imbued with the spirit of our Saviour.

Holy love, and an abiding faith, grow out of efforts made to do good to others, so far, at least, as to their proper culture. Thus, private members of the church, possessed of but ordinary abilities, have accomplished much in the conversion of souls to God, and have themselves come eminently to possess the spirit of Christ. The philosophy of the religious affections, and the facts of experience, are in accordance with this sentiment.

The spirit of prayer is eminently promoted, by engaging earnestly in doing good. He who seeks the good of others, is led to become sensible of his own weakness, and to feel the need of the divine aid. And the same desire which prompts his benevolent action, is also the inspirer of his prayer. His labors bear him to the throne of grace, and his prayers encourage

him to labor, that he may gain the end which, in prayer, he seeks. Of what use is it to pray, "thy kingdom come," and yet never put forth an effort to advance this kingdom? Prayer, to be successful, must inspire personal activity to secure that which is asked of God. Thus, the good at which we aim inspires prayer; and the prayer encourages the effort to do good; and this acting and reacting of prayer and good works, tend to Christian improvement.

Doing good, leads one carefully to guard his heart against the influence of temptation, and to construct a consistent religious character, which shall aid him in the resistance of all the wiles of Satan. He who has on hand some benevolent project, and daily labors to promote it, is rendered peculiarly sensitive as to any influence of a wrong character proceeding from himself, which may countervail his endeavors. He is led to be very watchful over his conduct, and to do nothing which may not fall in with, and promote, in the best manner, his active endeavor to be useful.

Holy joy in the soul is created by such unceasing efforts to do good. They cause the soul to resemble the well of living water springing up unto eternal life. It is possible for the Christian so to occupy his mind with doing good, as to build up its happiness on a new basis,

and impart a joy which no man can take away. There is joy awakened in the endeavor to be useful; and higher still, in the consciousness of success. Thus, every Christian, through the kind assistance of Heaven in his endeavors to do good, may create his own spiritual joy. While he aims to make others happy in religion, he is made happy himself. His soul becomes like a watered garden, filled with the flowers and fruit of grace. For, if it awaken joy in God to give expansion to his benevolence in works of mercy towards men, it awakens like joy in his people to become the imitators of his excellence. And this is the joy of those engaged in doing good.

Let not the young Christian think that he will make advances in spiritual life, unless through a consistent endeavor to be useful. If he trust in the possession of faith without works, he is dead. Good works are useless, as acts of merit, for the sake of which we hope to be saved; but they are invaluable as the fruits of piety and the evidences of love to God. If one would make the highest attainments in religion, and insure to himself a life of peace, let him imitate the example of Christ in going about doing good.

Chapter Twenty-Second.

AFFLICTION VIEWED IN ITS RELATIONS TO PEACE.

Can the afflicted have peace? In our trials, can we be tranquil? May our various losses of property, health and friends, be so viewed, as to insure in us a feeling of calm repose? Amid our sorrows may we rejoice? How can this be? Has the Gospel power to relieve the mind of all its distresses? If not, it would fail in that which is essential to our happiness. There must be, there are, consolations fitted to relieve a mind oppressed with sorrow. And these are discernible in the faith which our Saviour bids us repose in him, as our only solace in adversity.

To confide in him as a Saviour, and to treat as true what he has communicated for our instruction, is the real ground of all spiritual consolation. Faith involves a practical reception of the truth. If one should believe himself to be in danger, his faith would be manifested by the efforts made to escape. He who believes a message sent to him, that his child is at

the point of death, treats that message as true, and shows that he believes it, by instantly hastening to its sick-bed. It is the nature of faith to treat as true that which is divinely communicated. It is through faith that the facts of the Gospel are received, and appropriated to our necessities. To accredit the fact that three and two are five, imposes on us no responsibility. Faith terminates in the fact received as true. But it is different in respect to that which involves the responsibility of our acting. Faith in the assurance that our child is drowning, does not terminate in our reception of this as true, but inspires our active endeavors to save its life. It involves this responsibility. It is not the intellectual act of believing, but the nature of the thing believed, which produces upon us its influence. We believe an abstract, mathematical truth, as certainly as we do one which involves our happiness, but it exerts no influence over us. But to receive and treat as true the testimonies of Christ respecting a future, happy existence, and the means to attain it, devolves on us responsibility, and inspires our efforts to secure the prize.

We greatly mistake, when we trust in the virtues of a dead faith; or think that the intellectual act of believing is the kind of faith

which is suited to confer consolation on the afflicted. Food effects the purpose for which it is designed, by being appropriated to the solace of hunger. It is not the appropriation merely, but the thing appropriated, on which the benefit depends. Faith is an appropriation to our necessities of that which is divinely communicated. No benefit can be derived from believing, unless the objects of faith are treated as realities. It is through faith that the truths of the Gospel are thus treated. It is the nature of these truths which produces a happy effect upon the soul in affliction.

In this effect of faith, there is no mystery. It is in the nature of the truths received, that we discover the means of its influence. Faith, like a simple lens which collects the beams of the sun into a focal and burning point, receives the scattered truths of God's word, and concentrates them upon the afflicted mind. It is the medium through which these truths are appropriated to our need. And yet it is not the medium, but the truth applied through that medium, which accomplishes the desired end. It is therefore proper to inquire, what there is in Christ, and in the teachings of his word, which, received as true, is fitted to relieve the afflicted mind of all its sorrows. If one receive as true the testimonies of life and immortality, given by Jesus Christ in his Gospel,

the natural effect of such a belief will be, to render him less solicitous about the world, and its pleasures.

When we view the trials of life in themselves considered, they appear to be very great. Here is one, for example, who had amassed riches, and had the expectation of increasing his wealth still more, but has suddenly met with severe reverses, and is now reduced to a mere competency. He has food and raiment, but not thousands to lavish on his pleasures. He feels his loss to be almost insupportable. He grieves over it, when he thinks that, but for his misfortunes, he would have been worth millions. But these misfortunes have changed the whole aspect of his life, and he mourns over them, as if everything valuable were gone.

Others discover causes of dissatisfaction in the unequal distribution of Heaven's gifts. One has been deprived of personal beauty through disease, or is deformed, or lame, or blind; or, through some terrible accident, has been cut off from the enjoyment of life, in the midst of high anticipations, and is dissatisfied with the dispensations of the Divine Providence. A corroding envy of others, more prospered than himself, robs his mind of peace. He repines at his unhappy lot, and through the murmurs of his discontent, renders others around

him miserable. Others are disturbed because their expectations of happiness have been blighted, through means above their control. Disappointment, instead of joy, has filled their soul, and they mourn over their sad fate. The world to them is very dark, and the sun of their hopes has set in endless night.

On others, death has made an inroad, and bereaved them of one most tenderly loved. Parents mourn the loss of a beloved, and perhaps an only, child. They had rejoiced in the gift of a kind Father, when that child was bestowed upon them; they had watched over it with deep solicitude, marked the development of its mental powers, noticed, and spoken to each other of all its winning ways, perhaps treated it as an idol; but, in an unexpected moment, by disease, or some terrible catastrophe, the tender flower falls, cut by the mower's scythe. The sweet smile no longer plays on those lips, the animated eye is closed, and all that remains of that dear object of affection is its cold and lifeless corpse. What sorrows afflict those parents as they bend in grief over that child! How sad are they, while, with broken hearts, they see the lid of the coffin closed, and those features on which they once dwelled in delight, forever excluded from their gaze! Can they again find peace? Or death may have entered the family

and cut down its head, leaving those who never knew affliction before, to weep a husband or parent slain. When the disconsolate mourner views the objects of his affection withered and gone, where can he find relief? Is peace to him accessible?

Innumerable are the causes of disquietude which affect our happiness, and excite the heart to murmur. Often, the troubles of life are like successive waves, which come dashing after each other to the shore. To these trials we are exposed. They are incident to human frailty. They are the offspring of earth, and are ever associated with it. The pain we suffer, the losses we endure, and our bereavements, are all earthly.

And what is earth? What is all that it can give or take away, compared with those eternal realities upon which we are soon to enter? If I should represent all that we can ever enjoy of earth by a single dot, and then draw a line as the representative of eternity, each portion of which, equivalent to a dot, should represent an equal portion of duration to the present life, how far must I extend that line to give a fair representation of eternity? When must my hand cease to move? How long must that line be? Could it ever have an end? Now, when we bring the happiness to be forever enjoyed with God, into contrast with the sorrows of the pres-

ent life, it makes them appear very insignificant. And yet this happiness is reserved, in heaven, for all who love God. Faith receives its testimonies as true, and treats this glorious world as a reality. It thus casts all temporal anxieties into the shade, representing them as unworthy to be regarded, in comparison with the glories hereafter to be revealed. What are all our afflictions and tears? Why should we distress ourselves about the evils we here experience, and which can deprive us of only a few momentary joys? If we view all our happiness as earthly, then, whatever diminishes aught from it, will appear to us as occasioning a loss; but, when we view it as extending throughout eternity, we shall regard it in a very different light. Our present afflictions will appear only as the fleecy clouds which occasionally obscure the sun, and are quickly gone. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." In addition to this, we are taught that God, in his providence, is ever nigh, for our protection and deliverance. He numbers the hairs of our head, and not one of them falleth to the ground without his knowledge. If we thought that no one cared for us, we might feel concerned lest some evil should occur, which would prove fatal to our peace. Or if we thought that, amid the pressure of his cares, God could

not attend to us, or might forget us, we should tremble. But our Saviour teaches us not to fear that this can ever occur. And if so, we are led to inquire why we are afflicted, and if there is any wise and good end to be gained by our suffering. Undoubtedly there is. It is for our good. "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." "Before I was afflicted," says the Psalmist, "I went astray." "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at those which are unseen." Affliction teaches us patience, and resignation to our Father's will. It strengthens our faith, and enables us to take a firmer hold on Christ. An arm inured to labor is large and rigid. It has a capability of muscular action, which an ordinary arm does not possess. Strength has been imparted by constant use. So, by habitual exercise, does faith attain a similar power. If there were no afflictions in life, faith would be feeble, compared with what it is when disciplined and schooled by adversity. Our hold, by faith, on Christ would also be feeble. But when, tossed on the boisterous waves, and beginning to sink, we are, with Peter, led to lay hold on Christ, we are enabled to acquire a power of faith otherwise unattainable.

It was in this way that the early Christians cultivated their faith. They were cast into the midst of trials of no ordinary character. They were thrown into a caldron of afflictions, and had no rest amid their adversities. They were, therefore, led to lay hold on Christ with a firm and enduring grasp. By their worldly anxieties, they were prompted, through faith, to cast themselves unreservedly upon the Saviour. Their faith was thus increased, and waxed stronger and stronger unto the end.

It is the natural effect of storms beating upon the Christian, to lead him to fly to Christ for shelter. He who is in a foundering ship, in mid ocean, if he believe in Christ, is enabled, through faith, to commit himself to his gracious protection, assured of his almighty wisdom, power, and grace. He is in the midst of trouble. Friends may be awaiting his return from a distant country, and though he may be conscious that he will see these loved ones on earth never again, yet his confidence in God may rise above all fear, and bring his soul into the quietude of a calm repose. He may feel that, if it is God's will, the ship will yet weather the tempest; but if not, all is well.

Most of the deaths which occur are unexpected. Our friends do not often die at the time, and in the way we think to be best.

We see things differently from God, because we are so ignorant. Children are often taken in place of their parents, and we wonder at it; the healthful, in place of the infirm. None of these events occur just as we should have ordered. But what of that? Shall we, on that account, feel troubled and repine at God? It is the natural effect of our Saviour's teaching, when believed by us, to still these murmurs. The great facts of the Divine Providence, received and trusted in by us, naturally tend to our relief.

But faith in Christ involves not only the acceptance of his testimonies as true, but a personal reliance upon him, and confidence reposed in him, as our Saviour. It is the source of all true peace, because it provides for the sinner a refuge and defence from all his distressing fears. To believe in him is to receive and treat him as that divine person whom he represents himself to be. It is to confide in him as omniscient, omnipresent, infinitely wise, powerful, holy, just and good. It is to identify our happiness with his; to build upon him; to dwell in him; to become the objects of his constant care. Assured of this, why should we tremble at any event of a threatening or afflictive nature? If we have a firm hold of his hand, and are assured of his ability and willingness to lift us over all the rough places in our path of life, and to protect

us from all the dangers in the way, what occasion is there for fear? In him, we have wisdom, power and benevolence, infinitely superior to all the painful exigencies of our condition in life, and these ready to be applied for our aid. No matter how poor we may be, or friendless, or exposed to the incursion of evil; for we cannot be afflicted any more than Christ purposes for his glory and our good. What calamity can befall us of which he is not cognizant? What affliction, the sting of which he cannot remove? The glorious inheritance which he confers far exceeds any degree of sorrow we may here experience.

Faith not only brings the future blessedness of the saints home to the mind as a reality, and also the guiding and protecting providence of God, but it brings Christ himself into the view of the mind, as the ever-present Saviour, who has laid down his life for us, and whom we may therefore trust with a firm and abiding confidence. Faith receives all these as realities, and appropriates them, in their fulness and power, to the relief of our miseries. It thus overcomes, supplants, and removes them. In view of the blessed truths which Christ has revealed, all our burdens of worldly sorrow may seem light. Our severest trials are but light afflictions which endure but for a moment, contrasted with that

eternal weight of glory which is to be conferred hereafter.

But methinks I hear some repining on account of their losses, and murmuring at the course of the Divine Providence. The world is full of little vexations and annoyances, to worry those who set their hearts upon it, and even to rob the Christian of his peace. And some, if they have no real cause of such anxieties, will create them by their folly. But the disturbing power of all these troubles arises from the want of faith;—the want of that heartfelt, practical, daily confidence in the Saviour which the Christian should ever feel. In proportion to the weakness of our faith, will the world afflict us. He who views the world as the source of all his happiness, will discover enough, every day, to disturb him. Little things magnify themselves in proportion to their proximity. A gnat, close to the eye, appears larger than a distant eagle. This is the source of many mistakes, and of much unhappiness. We look at little things, and forget great ones. We make ourselves unhappy because our houses are waxing poor, and our furniture is becoming old-fashioned, when, in a week, we may be summoned to leave them. We torment ourselves by our efforts to shine in the world; or distress ourselves about the

health of our friends, when death is in our system, and will soon remove us. A thousand sources of unhappiness exist, which may disturb our peace, if we will permit them to do so. But if we do, we commit a great error. We ought not so to regard the world as to feel that it can be our home. We are only travellers. What if our apparel be coarse; it is just suited to our habit as pilgrims, and will not be ruined by the dust. We are passengers in a ship which is bearing us across life's ocean; and what matter is it, if, during the voyage, we experience the want of some comfort which we covet, or are exposed to some annoyance? We are borne by the winds and waves toward the desired haven; and what matters it if our friends, who have been sailing in company with us, gain it a little sooner than we do? Ought we to grieve ourselves on this account? Should we not rather rejoice that they have reached their home? Or, if we have reason to think that their bark has been foundered, and that they are lost, should we not repose such confidence in Him who rules, as to feel submissive to his holy will?

Parents often grieve intensely over the loss of a child snatched from them in its infancy. But how little do they know of the wisdom and mercy of God, in respect to that very

providence! That child, had it lived, might have lost its health, become blind, a cripple, or insane, or plunged into sin, and brought destruction on itself, and given a fatal wound to its parents' peace; and God, foreseeing this, may have also seen that the only way to save that child would be to take it away in infancy. His stroke, though severe, is therefore merciful. And faith rests in him, with an abiding confidence.

Or, God may so lead the parent to him, through this affliction, and communicate so much of his presence to the afflicted soul, as to change its sorrows into joy. "I have felt more real happiness," said one, "since I stood over the grave of that child, than all that I ever felt before. God never before seemed so near to me, nor his love so sweet." And this is the natural effect of affliction, as it reaches the true believer. The more it shakes his confidence in the world, the more does it strengthen his hold on Christ.

As I look around me, I behold one blind, another deaf, another deformed, another hobbling around on crutches, or pushing himself along on wheels, because deprived of the use of his limbs; and another bedridden, or dying. These, and other sources of affliction, tend to occasion great mental distress. But why

should he who has Christ for his friend, feel disturbed by them? I see men creating anxieties for themselves, worried and distressed beyond measure by their want of success in life, overwhelmed with cares about little things, tossed, like clams upon the beach, into an unfavorable position by one wave, to be relieved by the next, thus ever changing, ever disturbed. I see the source of all the disquietude which is thus occasioned, to be the want of an abiding faith in God. Faith is the remedy for fear—the source of peace. In the midst of our anxieties, we must endeavor so to possess our souls with the greatness, excellence, and blessedness of God, and so to commit ourselves to him, as to elevate us above the disturbing power of affliction. Who would ever trouble himself about his worldly losses, who had in immediate prospect a kingdom, and an eternal crown? The greatness of his privileges would more than compensate for what he suffers. So, if we possess our souls with faith in Christ, and rest, with an assured confidence, on his testimonies, we shall have a certain antidote to the troubles which here afflict us. The world, with all its trials, will sink in our esteem, in proportion as eternity, with its glories, rises upon our eye. And when we come to leave the world, we shall view this last great trial as too insig-

nificant to awaken a moment's dread. If it come suddenly, we shall be ready. If it come to us while surrounded by our friends, we shall bear them testimony of God's faithfulness unto the end. If it come to us by the way—if a sudden plunge of the railroad car in which we ride, from a high embankment, or the terrible conflagration of the steamer in which we sail, imperil, or even take away our life, it will be sweet, amid such dangers, to trust in Christ, and to feel that we are in his arms. And, having escaped the cares, anxieties, and sorrows of life, it will be sweet, sweeter still to feel, that nothing remains to us but endless blessedness with God, in a world without tears, which death can never enter.

Chapter Twenty-Third.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF A LIFE OF PEACE.

Can anything exceed this blessedness? To be enabled to look up to God in the spirit of reconciliation, to feel a sweet repose in him, to trust in the divine promises, and live to the divine glory, is truly a blessed state. There is no happiness on earth compared with it. To the soul that is conscious of unforgiven sin, there is no true peace. But, reposing by faith on Jesus Christ, its burden is removed. It receives the assurance that its sins are blotted out. The conscience is relieved of its heavy load. Not the holy angels in heaven are more free from the sting of sin, than is the rebel against God, when he has obtained assurance of forgiveness, at the feet of Jesus.

Here the soul finds rest. It reposes upon the bosom of Jesus, and is happy in the thought of being encircled by his arms. And with him for its friend, it is enabled to look up to God, in holy confidence and joy. You who have experienced this mercy, know the state of mind

which is here described. It is eminently one of peace. The rapturous joy of the soul, at its escape from hell, as often rises from delusion, as from true piety. Joy springs from the assurance of divine acceptance; and it would equally rise from a belief of this acceptance, even though this belief were founded in delusion. The hypocrite may have as much joy as the saint, and his transports may rise even higher than those of the true convert, because they are the transports of a selfish mind, at a supposed deliverance from hell. But the joy of the true Christian springs from a view of God as glorious in his mercy, and in providing a free forgiveness for sinners through his Son. That of the hypocrite, is joy at being relieved from the fear of a miserable eternity; that of the Christian, is joy in the excellence and glory of the infinite God, as a being who is able to fill all the desires of the soul. That of the hypocrite expresses itself in raptures at the thought of going to heaven, and wearing a glorious crown, and mingling in its blest society; that of the Christian springs from a view of Christ's wonderful love to one who is unworthy.

Peace is the state of mind which ever characterizes one who has received forgiveness. As it was sin that occasioned his disquiet, so, when the conflict is ended by a submission to God, all is peace. This peace is the foundation of true hap-

piness. Every joy of the converted soul runs down, and takes root in that new relation to God, into which one is introduced through converting grace. Every pleasure before experienced was shallow and unsubstantial, because not based in this relation. What are thrones, what are sensual pleasures, and all that the worldly heart most covets, without peace; what enjoyment can they afford?

Can the soul, disturbed by the consciousness of guilt, and in view of eternal justice, find pleasure in delicious viands, or sparkling wine? It may, but it is momentary, and passes away with the taste and relish of those viands, leaving a sting behind. Can one who feels that he is an offender against the majesty of heaven, and exposed to the instant loss of all good, be happy in the circle of those abandoned to worldly pleasures, in the ball-room, and the maddening whirl of intoxication? Will riches make him happy? Will elevation to power? Could he reach the summit of his wishes, and repose on the pillow of State; yea, could a mighty empire acknowledge him as its head, would that render him happy? No. The resources of earth could not do it, so long as his soul is devoid of peace. He must possess a spiritual repose, or all that is merely external will fail to confer happiness upon him. So long as his conscience is disturb-

ed with guilt, and oppressed by fear, he cannot be happy.

But peace with God, separate from any of the luxuries which wealth confers, is the source of pure and substantial joy. And this peace the humble are as capable of experiencing as are the worldly great; and they are far more likely to avail themselves of it as the source of their happiness, than are those who are burdened with the cares of wealth, and who trust in the pleasures which prosperity heaps around them. The humble soul may find peace in the consciousness that its guilt is removed, and may thus gain a source of happiness of which the world cannot deprive it.

This peace dwells in the soul, and fills it with calm and heavenly delight. What pleasure can be greater to one burdened with sin, than to feel that it is forgiven? The great and infinite God, of irresistible power and awful terror, instantly becomes a friend. Not that he changes; but the sinner, who yields himself to God in true submission, and goes over to him in love. And this change in his heart gives God a new aspect. The terrors which existed in his mind are dispelled by the assurance of his love. The effect of this change is to confer peace. God has become his reconciled Father. And with him on his side, he is assured that no enemy can rob

him of his happiness. Having access to the fountain, he pines not for the shallow and muddy stream. He can be happy without riches. Having food and raiment, he is therewith content. His life is hid with Christ in God, and he knows that when he who is life shall appear, he also shall appear with him in glory.

This beginning of a life of peace is most blessed. It is the introduction of the soul into that state of friendship with God to which it had long aspired. Who can describe it? Who can communicate the knowledge of it to one who knows it not? It is heaven begun on earth. From this period, and onward, the world has a new aspect, and divine things present themselves very differently to the mind. All the happiness of the Christian centres in this peace. If it be maintained unimpaired, the life will flow pleasantly along, like the crystal stream that waters Paradise. Amid its trials, changes, conflicts and burdens, the soul which abides in peace with God will be undisturbed :

> "No rude alarms of raging foes,
> No cares to break the long repose,
> No midnight shade, no clouded sun,
> But sacred, high, eternal noon,"

will characterize its state of holy rest. This ought to be its course in life. But is it probable that it will be? If the soul were, at this point,

separated from the corrupt body, and from a tempting world, it would. Its love would never be interrupted, nor its blessedness give place to disquietude.

But, in this world, the case is different. Not but that one who has found peace may continue to live so as ever to abide in the light of God's countenance; not but that God will impart his grace to preserve the soul that trusts in him. For there can be no question on these points. There is no apology or excuse for the Christian's ever being in any other state than one of high and holy enjoyment of God. From his first start in the Christian life, he may pursue such a course as to gain this blessedness. If he will observe and do all that God commands, so far as it lies within the compass of his ability, and maintain a nearness to him in spiritual communion,—walking in an abiding faith day by day,—then the candle of the Lord will shine upon his path, and he will be blessed.

But this privilege will not be his on any other terms. Disobedience will insure its loss. Yielding to temptation, and to the allurements of the world, will sweep away his happiness like the incursion of a mighty flood. And here is where Christians are discovered to fail. They imagine, having found Christ, that they shall never know the power of sin to disturb them

more. But who has not? Who that has started in the way of peace, has never felt disturbed at the thought of his own unfaithfulness, and never been ready to sit down in anguish, and give up all hope in despair? It is in consequence of wandering from the path of duty, that the mind is thus discomposed, and fear returns; and, instead of bright skies, the pleasant sun, and flowers by the way, covering the gay face of nature, clouds arise, rocks and pitfalls abound, and the Christian goes on his way, stumbling and halting, and in the dark; when, if he had not wandered, he might have found a smooth and easy path, and suitable places to stop and refresh himself, and rest his weary limbs, when night should overtake him.

It is this wandering from the way which inflicts a wound upon his peace. It is turning aside from that beaten path which is constantly illumined by the glories of the divine presence, which occasions this disquietude, and leaves him to wander among the tombs, or to sleep on the enchanted ground, and become the victim of the giant Despair, to be incarcerated for wearisome days in his gloomy prison. Thus Christian and Hopeful wandered, and endured an agony of soul, before they again found the King's highway, such as they experienced when they first came to Christ. And this portrays the state of every

Christian who has become a wanderer. Just at the point where, in conscious pride, he turns away from God, the peace of his soul departs, and never can it be restored, till, through repentance, he renews his covenant relations, and, through faith, partakes of those gifts which render him conscious of God's friendship. So long as he continues to wander, it makes his case worse. He renders it more and more desperate by his continued neglect of duty, and sets up fresh barriers to his return.

What can be more painful to one who has tasted of the heavenly gift, and found peace and joy in God, than to come by his own thoughtless conduct into the wretched state of one who feels himself estranged from mercy? The world, as to any pleasures for him, is slain, and he can find in it no happiness. Where can he turn? There is midnight resting on his soul. His joys are gone. He is ready, with Job, to say, "O that I were as in months past, in the days when God preserved me, when his candle shined upon my head, and when, by his light, I walked through darkness." Sorrows, such as none but the wanderer from God ever knows, now fill his mind. Such darkness, such doubt, such consciousness of guilt, such fearfulness of having grieved the Holy Spirit, such a sense of injury done to others by an inconsistent life, so press upon the

thougths, as to overwhelm him in distress. And here it is that the difficulties of return magnify themselves. Satan tempts him to think that if he does return, he will but wander again. In this way, and by such blows on his anvil, does he scale off hypocrites from the Church, and strive to discourage and turn away the real child of God. And he may, for a time, be successful. But that longing for peace which is kindled in the soul of the true Christian, will manifest itself in endeavors again to find mercy; and he will not rest till, in true penitence, and with humble faith, he again sits at Jesus' feet.

If wandering from God occasions disquiet, and brings the soul into deep distress, it sets off, by contrast, the blessedness resulting from true obedience. Life includes the successive actions of the man, and his successive states of mind.

If the wandering and inconsistent Christian do many things that are wrong, and experience much mental disquietude, and his life is made up of light and shade, of brightness and of gloom, as he walks with God, or wanders from him, it is not so with him who keeps the way, and abides firm amid temptation. He enjoys continued peace, and a succession of joys which nothing can disturb. And here the full blessedness of a life of peace presents itself to view. It rises in contrast with one of an opposite charac-

ter, as heaven displays its glories in contrast with the darkness and miseries of hell. So does the holy and useful life of the Christian shine forth like the sun above the clouds, which leaves the darkness, the tempest, the lightning and the storm to expend their fury upon the earth, while it continues to roll on its way undisturbed by these commotions, and glorious in its effulgence. So is the happy and useful life of the Christian. "For the path of the just is as the rising light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

If we view the life of peace at its commencement, we discover its blessedness. If we mark any point during its progress, we shall discover its blessed effect upon the mind. That peace which is founded in reconciliation to God, is incapable of being disturbed by any thing but that which tends to avert his friendship. It is based on that which lies beyond the reach of the storms of earth. These cannot disturb it. The Christian is calm and happy amid them all. He stands as on a rock, uplifted from the waves of strife which roar and dash around it. He is happy in living for others, and promoting their good.

"To them, his heart, his love, his griefs are given,
But all his serious thoughts find rest in heaven.

As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
Thoughround its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

Such is the effect of a life of devotedness to God. Peace reigns in the soul of his obedient child. The world cannot expel it; the sorrows of earth cannot drown it; the heat of the furnace of affliction cannot dry up its springs, and thus exhaust them; but it is, in every obedient soul, like "a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." And this peace continues to shed its blessedness upon the soul even unto the end. Those causes of apprehension which give alarm to others, produce no such effect upon the soul imbued with peace. The thought of death awakens no disquietude. God is upon the throne, and his empire extends over all worlds. He reigns over the universe. Departed saints are under his care, and living men. For his empire is universal. The world, and eternity, are but provinces of the same kingdom. To die is not to go beyond the reach of his providence, or out of the protection of his arm. Hence death awakens no such dread in the Christian as it does in others. For dying is but a transfer of the soul to another part of God's dominions, and an introduction of it into a new and separate state. It gives up the body to the grave, to

be purified and fitted to become the new residence of the justified soul. It is the change which flesh and blood must experience to enter into the kingdom of God.

All the fears which crowd upon the mind in view of death, rise from the consciousness of unforgiven sin. "The sting of death is sin." But the soul that abides in peace is not susceptible of this evil. It rejoices in sin forgiven, and can truly say, "Thanks be to God who giveth me the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Thus mercy triumphs unto the end. The blessedness of the life of peace continues to its close. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that life is peace."

> So fades a summer cloud away,
> So sinks the gale when storms are o'er;
> So gently shuts the eye of day,
> So dies a wave along the shore."

Thus, in blessedness, terminates the Christian's connection with the world. As the sun descends in glorious majesty behind the western hills, and his lingering brightness tinges the clouds with golden hues, so lingers the holy influence of one who lives devoted to God. It blesses others after his departure, and his name is had in everlasting remembrance.

Shall this life of peace be yours? It may be, if you will take the proper steps to secure it.

You may live in obedience to God, and in the enjoyment of religion, all your days, and be a bright and shining Christian, whose influence may become a blessing to those with whom you mingle, and your end may be peace. Or you may pursue the opposite course, and involve your soul in distressing fears. Clouds may rise upon your horizon, imparting gloom. You may be barren and unfruitful in the vineyard of the Lord. And when you come to die, you may discover the folly of your wasted and misspent life, when it is too late to repair your error.

Do not, then, set up the standard of the world, but that of the Gospel, as the one which you will strive to reach. Let it be your aim to do the will of God, and ever to live in communion with him, that you may abide in peace beneath the shadow of his wing.

Chapter Twenty-Fourth.

PEACE AMID STORMS.

LIFE is often compared to a perilous voyage, in which the mariners are tossed by the waves, buffeted by adverse winds, sometimes becalmed, and occasionally assailed by storms. Amid these diversified dangers, there is a natural terror felt lest the bark in which one sails should founder, and all be lost. Often the timid are tempted to give the cry of alarm, and to express distrust of the Divine Providence, by the murmur, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" And as often may they have their fears allayed, by the music of his voice, commanding the winds and the waves, saying, "Peace, be still."

While conflicting with the storms which assail us on the voyage of life, can we discover any solace for those fears which are naturally awakened? Amid the temptations, the buffetings, the adversities which crush our hopes, can we be tranquil? In view of the awful scene of death, the dissolution of the body in the grave, the resurrection morn, the dreadful judgment, and the final award, can we have peace?

Yes, there is peace; peace even amid storms. In every affliction incident to our frail and dying nature, the Christian may calmly repose his confidence in God. This confidence is the blessed fruit of religion. It is the peace which the Saviour imparts to those who love him. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." The world gives that only which is momentary; but that which flows from Christ, no man taketh away. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." Most grateful is it to the poor mariner, who is tossed on the ocean of life, to know that he may have peace.

There is a class of storms which invade the repose of the soul, wakening convictions, and exciting into wild and tempestuous fury the waves of passion and terror, and which have their origin in sin. "The wicked are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." This does not affirm that they may not attain it; but, that they do not possess it. There is a conflict in the selfish mind between the claims of God, and the purpose to disclaim his authority, and resist his righteous demand. God has the rightful empire over man; but the creature claims the right to control his own actions. So long as the sinner is undisturbed, he

is comparatively tranquil, and persuades himself that his house is built upon a rock. But no sooner does God approach him by storms, than he trembles, his fancied peace is gone ; his house is shaken, and terrors fill his breast.

So felt the Prodigal Son in that distant country whither he had wandered. He had gone from his father's house, and spent his substance in riotous living. He had abused the kindness of his parent, and had reduced himself to a wretched state, of which he was beginning to be conscious. He trembled at the thought of his own wickedness, and feared that the judgment of heaven would overtake him, before he should return. And he arose, and came to his father, in the full confession of his sin. Nor was it till he heard the voice of his parent, almost choked with emotion, exclaiming, "This my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found," that his anxious fears were quieted, and he felt sweet peace. So may the anxious, trembling sinner return to God in penitence, and, in the experience of his forgiving mercy, find peace. And when he receives the assurance of this mercy, and hears, as it were, the Saviour's voice, saying, "Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace," the thought of his sins will trouble him no more. Christ hath borne them all in his own body on the tree. The remembrance of them by the par-

doned sinner will only waken a fresh remembrance of God's forgiving love.

Where now are the storms which once disturbed his repose? The Saviour's voice hath allayed them, peace reigns within. Sweet peace! Most grateful is the repose which it gives. Can I ever forget the hour when it first assured my soul of mercy? Sweet peace! How like an angel of love it came, stood by my side, cooled my burning brow, chased away my fears, and bade me dare to trust my immortal soul in the hands of the gracious Redeemer! Storms have since invaded my repose; angry billows have beat upon me. I have felt the darkness arising from neglect of duty to God, and never has my soul been quieted, till it has found the assurance of pardon, at the feet of Christ. And has peace returned? Not as at first, for it was then without alloy; but now, it is mingled with trembling thoughts, lest it should no sooner come, than go. And yet, all the treasures of earth could not purchase for me the blessedness of which it is the source. The storms which now assail, and the convictions and fears which disturb my serenity, only awaken a more ardent longing for fuller and more perfect enjoyment in God. I look upward, and, while the cloud meets my eye, I see the bow of promise, its base resting on earth, and its arch spanning the sky, and I see

reflected there the glories of that Sun of Righteousness, whose light chases away the darkness, the emblem of God's mercy, the sweet inspirer of hope. O blessed radiance! I live in the promise thou dost confirm;—in the vision of thy glories, the emblem of God, the evidence of his condescension and love.

When the soul has thus been comforted, it is still exposed to storms. Temptations, sweeping across the mind, and influencing its affections, occasion clouds, thick darkness, and tempests. He who before was tranquil, is now tossed on the billows raging around him. He looks with amazement upon the storm, and longs for some quiet haven, in which to cast anchor. Where can he discover one? It is only through Christ the faithful Pilot, who holds in his hand the winged tempest, and can bid the threatening waves be still, that he can find security. In the midst of his troubles, the trembling disciple must apply to Christ. He must go to him with a believing heart, confiding in his wisdom, power, and grace. And when he can feel that Christ is engaged upon his side, when he can renounce his sins, and, through celestial strength, can defy the tempter's power, he can gain repose. But he must part with his besetting sin; he must be willing to cut off a right hand, and to pluck out a right eye. He must take his place at the feet

of Jesus, and abide in his love, if he would again experience the blessing of tranquillity.

Adversities often come upon the Christian like a storm. In the midst of security, he discovers a danger not anticipated. The fortune for which he toiled suddenly begins to crumble away. All his efforts to retrieve it prove unavailing. Instead of continued wealth, poverty comes upon him like an armed man. Faith now yields to fear. Darkness ensues. And can such a mind recover its serenity? Not from the contemplation of the world. Peace springs from that true religion which instructs us that God is upon the throne, and that nothing occurs to affect the happiness of his children without his wise ordering. When the pious soul can sufficiently recover itself to view aright the relation of this world to its happiness, and to see how inferior are all worldly things compared with those which are divine, it feels composed. It is consoled in the loss of all things, by the influence of an abiding trust in God.

Often do we discover instances where those who have been stripped of their property and reduced to want, are thrown upon their spiritual resources for happiness, and are led, through this very means, to a holier life, greater fidelity to Christ, and to the cultivation of that nearness to God which imparts tenfold more happiness

than could have been derived from all from which they have parted. The storm was indeed terrible; but the peace which fills the soul infinitely surpasses in value every consideration of worldly change. The happy possessor of this peace can look back upon the dealings of the Divine Providence, and say,

> "Loud may the troubled ocean roar,
> In sacred peace our souls abide,
> While every nation, every shore,
> Trembles and dreads the swelling tide."

Afflictive are the bereavements of life. Often is the peace of the soul invaded through means which are unseen, and against which it is impossible to provide. Death enters the social circle, and leaves a happy family in tears. A beloved child or an affectionate parent has fallen, and caused a painful wound which earth cannot cure. The stricken mourner feels that his worldly hopes are crushed, as he follows, in mournful procession to the grave, the object of his fondest love. What can heal the wound? Who can wipe away those tears? Has the world any consolation to offer? It has none. Nothing can sustain the soul of the mourner but an abiding faith in God. None but a celestial hand can wipe away those tears. And yet God, who rules, may so fill the mind of the stricken mourner as to impart an effectual consolation.

He may communicate such spiritual joys as will remove the sting. Even to the widow and the fatherless may his love be so manifested, as to dry up their tears.

But of all the storms of life, there is none in view of which there is so much natural dread excited, as that which is to terminate our connection with earth. The mariner on life's ocean, having often escaped its perils, feels comparatively secure. He sees the storm rising, and hopes, by vigilant care, to weather it in safety. And now it comes. The waves swell to mountain height, the ship quivers at every dash, as they smite its timbers, or break over its deck. Still hope is buoyant in the mind. The wheel is actively and faithfully manned. Every thing which skill and ingenuity can devise is done to preserve the floating craft; but one misfortune after another reveals the imminence of their peril. The bulwarks are swept away, the rudder torn from its fastenings, the ship falls into the trough of the sea, an unmanageable wreck; the masts tremble, and come down with a terrible crash; and, unable to keep the deck, all who had crawled up thither seek safety below. Terror now reigns. Death seems inevitable, for there are no visible means of safety. One clasps his hands in mute despair, and seems horror-stricken at his approaching fate.

Another on his knees cries to God for mercy:—the most profane wretch is now loudest in his intercessions and promises. Amid this outcry, there is one who receives the fatal intelligence of approaching death without emotion. She is tranquil, amid the terrified ones around her. She looks upward with an abiding trust in God. Having lived to his glory, she is ready to go at his bidding. Not all the terrors of such a scene can remove her from the rock. Calmly does she await the issue, addressing words of pious counsel to the affrighted by her side. Religion, as developed in its influence upon her, is indeed beautiful. Her brow is serene, her soul is peaceful.

So have I seen one who, in the morning of life, and just as the beautiful bud was expanding into the flower, shut out from the world, by a lingering and fatal disease. The bloom forsakes her cheek, save the hectic flush which occasionally spread itself as upon marble; a hollow cough, and hurried respiration, symptoms not to be mistaken, give a clear indication of the character of the enemy under whose power she has come. Her worldly hopes are all fled. She sits in her solitary chamber, and looks out upon the passing world she is so soon to leave. She can mingle no more in its social pleasures, nor unite with the people of God in the worship of the sanctuary. And yet, not a murmur escapes

her. When she kneels in prayer, the words on her lips are, "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight." She sees the earthly house of her tabernacle dissolving, with quiet thoughts, assured of soon having a building above, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Peace fills her soul. With cheerful hope she commits her immortal spirit into the Saviour's hands, confident in the truth of his promises, and quietly awaiting the summons for her departure.

Such is the power of religion to confer peace amid storms. There was one I knew, a little boy, who for many wearisome days had been shut out from the world, and from the Sabbath school which he loved, descending by slow degrees to the grave. He saw it; he knew all. And what, said I, shall I tell your companions at the school? "Tell them," said he, his eye brightening with hope, "that it is sweet to die, trusting in Jesus, and leaning on his breast." Dear youth! he passed away like a flower that is crushed in its bud, leaving the sweet fragrance of piety behind. His end was peace.

There was another. She occupied a wide space in the affections of all who knew her. As life was passing away, after severe and terrible struggles with the enemy, her lips were seen to move. A friend listened, and what think you

were the words which flowed from them? "Sweet death!" "Sweet death!" Though the storm without was raging, peace was in her soul. "Come," said Addison, "and see how a Christian dies." And said one greater and holier in his influence upon the world, "O death, where is thy sting; O grave, where is thy victory! Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

That abiding trust in God, which is the governing affection of the mind that supremely loves him, deprives the thought of separation from the world of everything that is painful. The Christian feels that he is going to dwell with God; that his sins are forgiven, and his soul redeemed and saved; and while the tide of life ebbs, he is comforted with the hope of meeting in glory the Saviour whom he loves.

Thus, amid storms, there is peace. But there is one, if such it may be called, which we have reason to believe, will prove more terrible than them all. It is that which is coming upon the world in a day when Christ shall descend from heaven with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. Can the Christian sustain this trial? He can; he will, when this shall come; and what shall be its harbinger, none can tell. All those great changes predicted by the holy prophets respecting the progress and triumph of

the Redeemer's kingdom must first be made. Generation after generation must appear and pass away. The world must be converted to God. Quietness must succeed to the clangor of battle, and confusion, discord, and blood be rolled away. The sword must be beaten into ploughshares, the spear into pruning-hooks, and the nations learn war no more; and the banners of the Prince of Peace must wave over the whole earth.

Then will come the end. At some period unforeseen, and unexpected, nature will be convulsed. Darkness and tempests succeed each other, and the shrieking winds wail forth their last sad lament. The earth trembles as with inward throes. The lightnings flash, the thunders roar, and then all is still. Not a leaf quivers upon its stem. An oppressive silence pervades the world as if in anticipation of some awful development. The waves of the ocean dash with a heavy sound, and speedily die along the shore. Attention is now awakened, and all eyes are gazing upward, as in expectation of some new and strange result. Suddenly a light appears from heaven, breaking upon the darkness, and above the brightness of the sun. Brighter, and still brighter, it shines, and nearer does it approach, till there is revealed to the astonished eye the person of God's own Son coming in the

clouds of glory, with his attendant angels, to judge the world.

Then the trump of God shakes the earth and penetrates every grave, and the command is issued, "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment," and all who are in their graves start up in deep surprise. Each individual of our race finds himself under the eye of the Judge, before whose face earth and heaven flee away. Each feels that he is surrounded by omnipotent power, from which there can be no escape; imagination cannot paint the horrors of that scene, as displayed to those who never expected thus to meet God, and who have denied and rejected his Son, the Saviour of the world! The old man who lived and died impenitent, under the call of mercy proclaimed through Christ, the bold blasphemer, the moralist, the prayerless parent, and the ungodly child, now stand side by side, in speechless terror. And yet, amid these scenes of terror, there is peace. There are some who recognize the Judge as their friend, and long to meet him. No war of the elements, no agitations of terror in others, can shake their calm repose on God. Angels are now sent forth to sever the righteous from among the wicked, and the friends of the Redeemer soon find their place by his side. These mingle with the angels, and rejoice in the praises of their Saviour, entering into

his joy. But where are those who would not have him to reign over them? Clouds spread themselves over them, and gather thick over the earth on which they stood. The world is on fire; and infernal spirits rush forth, and drag the wicked from the caves and the dens whither they had fled for refuge, while a hellish laugh rings sharp above the roar and din of that tremendous conflagration.

But sweet is the peace of those who trust in Jesus. They return with him in triumph to the skies. They approach the celestial city, the New Jerusalem, and their songs of praise rise in sweet music. "O ye gates, lift up your heads, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battles. O ye gates, lift up your heads, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in."

They have gone. The gates, impulsive, opened wide, and the glorious company have vanished through their portals. And now they rest in peace. By the crystal river, and on the mount of God, they dwell in perpetual security. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them unto

living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

In heaven there is a peaceful rest. No consciousness of guilt there disturbs the pure and holy mind. No storms of temptation or sorrow sweep across those heavenly plains. No cares invade the repose of the weary pilgrim who has reached his home. Sweet peace! most blissful rest! Would that it might be your happy lot to experience it. Behold the prize, and so run that ye may obtain; that so an entrance may be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of God, of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Chapter Twenty-Fifth.

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS.

THE natural world is full of beauty. He who views the works of God with express reference to this quality, cannot fail to appreciate the justness of this remark. Wherever he turns his eyes, there is beauty to be admired. It is evident, from his works, that the great Architect of the world designed to spread out before the minds of his intelligent creatures the evidences of his own glory, and to make them feel that a God of exquisite taste and skill is on the throne. How it may strike others, I know not; but to my mind, these works of wisdom and of power convey thoughts the most pleasing of him who formed them for the display of his own perfections.

Who can look abroad upon the earth, as spread out before him, and not be impressed with its magnificence? What endless varieties of hill and valley, of wilderness and field, present themselves to the eye! Beautiful are the dense forests, where the trees vie with each

other in majestic grandeur, and where, by the little rivulet, far away from public gaze, in the deep wood, the tracks of the timid deer are traced. Nor less attired with beauty is the dale, down which the water glides fresh from its mountain springs, leaping and sparkling from rock to rock, now circling in eddies, or rushing on in wild commotion to find its level in the plain below.

And there is majestic beauty in the ocean, as its waves, in constant succession, roll in with resistless might, breaking and dashing upon the shore. And there is beauty in the clouds which betoken a coming storm, and which seem to pile themselves above each other like mighty hills, whose summits are resplendent with light. And there is beauty, mingled with majesty, in the storm itself, as it bursts in fury upon the earth; and in the mighty war of the elements, as with impressive grandeur it presents itself to the eye. And when the storm is over, there is beauty in the clear moon, which seems to glide along in silent majesty, shedding its mild beams upon our path; and in the stars, those brilliant orbs, which, undisturbed by the warring elements of earth, roll on their way so still, so uniform, so glorious, looking down upon us from their high abode, and seeming to whisper that in heaven all is peace.

O, who but one possessed of every perfection, could have made a world like this! God formed it for himself, and to excite the admiration and praise of those who love him. And if nature, which is his work, is so full of beauty, how glorious must he be when seen in heaven, and surrounded by those objects which he himself has selected, out of the furniture of the universe, as best suited to display his matchless taste in the decoration of his own abode! Most glorious must be the city, the palace of the Great King, enriched with ornaments of his own devising, standing forth to view, in all its lustre, as the habitation of holy beings, in the midst of whom God is enthroned.

And yet, it is not in the things that are seen, that the chief beauty of the universe consists. Created objects do indeed command our admiration; but there is a beauty superior to these; it is the beauty of holiness. The beauty of holiness! would that we might all discern it! Would that, in my thoughts, I could rise to a proper comprehension of it as it exists in God, and could excite in you such exalted conceptions of this chief beauty of creation, as to turn off your eyes from beholding vanity, and lead you to pursue that true wisdom which consists in loving and adoring the great Jehovah, and abiding in his peace!

How can I describe God to you, so as to impress you with his adorable excellence, and give you a just discernment of his moral beauty? You have a desire to know and love him. You wish to learn more of his perfections. Living in his world, surrounded with his power, yourself the workmanship of his hand, you feel that it is due to him, and to yourself, to form such an acquaintance with him as may conduce to a mutual friendship. You see and feel the inconsistency of courting the various artists of human pride, and lauding them to the skies, while you neglect the chief artist of the universe, whose works are resplendent with glory, and never attune your voice or heart to his praise. And you feel that it is becoming in you to acquaint yourself with him, and be at peace. Follow me, then, while I strive to give you some just and elevated views of this being, and to unfold to your perception God himself, as dwelling in the beauty of his holiness.

But what is holiness, and whence does it derive its moral lustre? To be holy, is to be pure, immaculate, complete in character, and wholly free from moral defilement. Holiness is the quality of being holy; and it is perfect, as it exists in God. It resembles the sun, and is glorious as is that orb of day. It is a combination of all the moral perfections existing in

nature, as light is of the primary colors. So, as illustrative of the moral excellence of God, it is said that he "is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

To say that he is a being of infinite wisdom and power, is to give but a partial description of him; it is necessary, for the completion of his perfect character, to add, that he is infinite in holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. If we strive to conceive of a perfect character, and do not include in it these various moral qualities, our conception of it will be defective. Suppose such a character to be possessed of all these qualities but one, and that this is the want of truth. This obvious defect must so reflect its baseness upon the existing virtues, as to cast a shade over the whole. Or, if the defect were of benevolence, or justice, it would be impossible to view the character, as a whole, but as base.

Holiness does not consist in a single virtue, but in a combination of them all; nor can the superabounding of one supply the deficiency of another. Each virtue, holding its distinct place, must itself be perfect, or the combination will not be perfect. Light, if any one of its primary colors is removed, will not be perfect light. Violet, indigo, blue, green, and yellow, cannot constitute light without the addition of orange and

red. So is it in respect to the moral virtues composing a perfect character. They must be individually perfect, and all exist in combination, or the character will not be a perfect one.

Holiness, then, is moral purity without alloy. And where shall we turn our eyes for an example of it, but to the Son of God? No sin ever alloyed his character, no wicked passion ever defaced his moral beauty. "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Had there been in him one moral defect, or the want of one virtue; had he been influenced by evil passions, excited by covetousness, or inflamed by lust, all the moral virtues which he possessed besides could not have rendered him worthy of our regard. But there was in him no such defect. He stood before the world endowed with every moral virtue; and no one can study his character and not feel that it was perfect.

If there were a community of such persons gathered into some city or village, all of whose members resembled in their character Jesus Christ, how different would be the state of that society from anything that our eyes ever beheld! Not a sinful thought or emotion would there dwell in any mind. There would be no deceit, nor fraud, nor slander, no indulgence of vile passions, no intemperance, profanity, or licentiousness, but perfect unity and love, and entire

freedom from every unhallowed thought. A community like this could offer no attraction to the sensual mind, but would awaken its disgust. The mere votaries of sense could find there none of the gratifications which they most covet. But those who love God would rejoice to behold such moral beauty, and long to become inhabitants of that place. No tongue can express the pleasure which such society would afford a pure and virtuous mind; and conscience would compel an admiration of it in those even who, from their moral debasement, cannot love it.

There is a beauty in holiness surpassing every other in the created universe; and this beauty may be developed to view by contrast with its moral opposite. Let your thoughts fix themselves on one towards whom nature has been lavish of her charms; whose exquisite form attracts universal admiration, and who for beauty of person is unrivalled amid the thousands of her sex. So full of grace is every motion, so radiant is her countenance, and sparkling the lustre of her eye, as to challenge the admiration of an angel. Added to these charms of person is a cultivated mind, and a heart filled with love to God, and the kindest sympathies for others' woes. Invested with every perfection, she resembles the mother of our race in innocence, and is crowned with virtues, as with a wreath of

flowers fresh from the garden of Paradise. You hear from her lips the most exalted moral sentiments, and your heart, attracted and adoring, gives its spontaneous acknowledgment to the beauty of holiness, as thus displayed to view.

But if, instead of these moral virtues, her heart were sensual, and her lips vulgar and profane; if she were full of passions adverse to moral purity, and her soul harbored feelings of envy, jealousy, and revenge, could you feel the same admiration that you did before? Thus instructed into her character, could you help loathing it? Would not all her perfect beauty passs for nothing, when you should discover it to be associated with everything of a debasing moral tendency? She might sparkle amid the gay throng; but, knowing her real character, you would turn from her in disgust. Who would drink the waters of a beautiful but poisonous spring? They might flow forth from their native fountain clear, cool, and sparkling, but, knowing that they contained an element fatal to life, you would turn from them with loathing. So the mind, corrupted with sin, like this poisoned fountain, sends forth into the world around it its deadly influences. That mind may be enclosed in a form of external beauty, but it defiles the most perfect work of God, kindling

disgust where it should naturally awaken pleasure.

Think of one who stands high in public estimation, who has filled stations of honor and usefulness in the Church and State. He is confided in, having stood, for years, in a position to which none but a man of undoubted integrity could ever be elevated. But it is suddenly discovered that he has, for a long time, been unscrupulously dishonest, appropriating to his criminal pleasures the funds intrusted to his care, and at the same time dexterously concealing the fraud. When this discovery is made, where does this man stand in the estimation of the virtuous? What becomes of the excellence of his past life, his benevolent deeds, his exemplary conduct? They are all forgotten, in view of that one act of moral turpitude. Never will he cease to be regarded with unutterable disgust, till the grave shall have blotted him out from the memory of all the living.

Think of one advanced to the highest station of power, and who reigns with absolute supremacy over millions. He presents himself to his people on State occasions to receive their homage, and, in appearance, is the exemplification of virtue. But if you knew him to be different from what he seems—to be cruel, revengeful and

unjust—you would form your estimate of him accordingly. But were he morally the reverse of this, and as really virtuous as he seems; were he inspired only by the most ennobling sentiments, could you withhold that tribute which virtue naturally claims from the conscience of every man? Would not the moral qualities displayed in him be truly beautiful, shedding over his person a hallowed influence, and elevating him, in the moral scale, to a high position, as worthy of our love?

Advance still further in your thoughts to the contemplation of God, who is illimitable in his perfections, and who stands before the universe as a glorious being, in whom is no moral defect. Conceive of him as endowed with every illustrious perfection, and glorious in his holiness. It would seem as if every being in the universe would admire, and love him, for his excellences. But there are some who do not. They see in him no beauty which they can desire. And there is one, who stands forth to view as the representative of this class, who is his open and avowed enemy. Between this wicked spirit of hell, and the pure and ever blessed God, how wonderful is the contrast! The one all passion, concentrating in himself every thing that is disgusting and horrible; the other, invested with moral beauty, his heart pure, his countenance

unruffled with passion, his brow serene as if the placid moon were his coronet, while mercy, goodness, and love, infinite and eternal in their nature, shed their attractions on his person. He stands before the universe as a glorious being, such as no mind can contemplate without an overpowering conception of the beauty of his holiness.

But let us return to the spirit of evil, and follow him into the society of those kindred spirits over which he presides, and listen to the recital of the wrongs which they have been the agents of inflicting. Here, they have assembled to meet their Chief, and report to him their various feats of wickedness. One says, that he has been successful in the corruption of a youth who was born of pious parents, dedicated to God in baptism, the hope of a widowed mother, and to whose prosperity in life she had looked forward with fond anticipations; and that he had, by means of his enticements, induced him to forsake the counsels of wisdom, to associate himself with vicious companions, to cast off the restraints of virtue, and become a profligate. Another, that he has induced one after his own heart to open a place of allurement for those who love that which intoxicates, and that there, in open day, and in the hours of evening, may be seen gathered the young and aged, the

bloated drunkard, and he who comes to take his first glass; and that there oaths and blasphemies are heard without cessation, and that many, through these corrupting influences, are now treading the broad road to death. Another, that he has been enabled to set at variance some who are accustomed to assemble around the table of Christ, and has so fast bound them to their prejudices and passions, that no power of Christian influence can ever reconcile them. These, and other instances of a like character, are variously narrated; and at each, applause, accompanied with an infernal laugh of triumph, rings through the place; while a smile of fiendish joy seems to light up their countenances at every successive triumph of vice. Who, that is possessed of a pure and virtuous mind, could view such a scene, and not feel that language is incompetent to express the loathing and horror felt of such beings?

But let us ascend to where God dwells in his glory, and is surrounded by unnumbered myriads of beings, bearing to himself a close moral resemblance. And now, the ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation, return from earth, to tell of the wonders and triumphs of redeeming grace. One announces a work of moral renovation as having been accomplished in the soul of one of

the children of earth; that an old man, who had lived thoughtless of God till his hoary locks proclaimed his advances to the grave, had been reclaimed from his wanderings. Through the assiduities of Christian love, and the prayers and example of a devoted wife, he had been led to reflection; and, with a broken heart and tearful eye, to look upon the Saviour, long denied and rejected. Then it was that the peace, to which he had been a stranger, came to his breast. And now he hates his sins, and loves God for the moral beauty of his character; and his soul, by loving such a being, rises above the degradation of sin, and aspires with cheerful hope to the holiness and bliss of heaven. Another speaks of a youth who, like the prodigal son, had wandered, and had returned. In the midst of his thoughtlessness, an arrow, from the quiver of truth, had pierced his heart. He felt that he had dishonored and ruined his own soul, and slain its peace. Long, and earnestly, did he seek mercy, and could not find it, because he trusted in his own righteousness, and in the merit of his prayers and tears. But, in an agony of conviction, he looked by faith to Jesus, as crucified for his sins, and then salvation came to his soul. And now he loves God, and delights in his holiness.

Others tell of the bold blasphemer, the Sabbath-breaker, the drunkard reclaimed, of the

alienated and conflicting reconciled, and of the lost found. And now, heaven rejoices at the glad tidings, and holy beings give expression to their emotions in rapturous songs of praise.

And is there no beauty in holiness, and in the sympathy felt by holy beings in the recovery and happiness of sinful and ruined man? Where is there moral beauty to be discovered, if not in the person of God, the representative of all virtue, the chief actor of all goodness? Surely, there is a beauty in holiness, such as none but those whose hearts are enlightened to behold it can suitably appreciate. Oppressed with sin, the stricken soul turns in repentance unto God, and, believing in the Saviour, finds sweet peace. And with this peace, a love of holiness, such as none but those who love God ever experience. The soul loves the house of God, his earthly temple, and the associates who find their happiness there. No coarse profanity, no boisterous mirth, no dishonoring of God, are there displayed; but there is awakened in the soul a quiet joy in the contemplation of the divine excellence, which renders this the most favored spot on earth to those who love God. It is not the magnificent shrine, the lofty temple, the fretted arch, the pealing organ, which fill the soul with pleasure; but it is the presence of

God, who is there worshipped in the beauty of his holiness.

Create, in fancy, a sacred temple so vast as to contain all the redeemed now on earth, of every Christian name. Let its foundations be entrenched, with massive granite, on some broad prairie of the West, and its mighty dome, lighted from the sky, lift up its head amid the clouds. Let this vast amphitheatre contain all who love God, and love the beauty of his holiness. Millions of voices raise the choral song of praise, millions reverently bend in prayer; and now they gather around the table of Christ, to celebrate his dying love. All are inspired by a common sympathy, kindled by love to Christ; all partake of the same pious emotions. O, what an assemblage is this! Peace reigns in every breast, and the God of peace is the presiding deity who is present there.

There is a place, not the creation of fancy, which is still more glorious. It is the New Jerusalem, which stands forth revealed to the eye of faith. The earth is not broad enough to sustain its ample foundations, nor strong enough to bear them; but far away, in illimitable space, is its site, in a world, centered amid the numberless orbs of light which compose the starry firmament, itself the glorious orb around which these

worlds and systems revolve; and, so ample are its dimensions, as to contain all who have ever loved God on earth, or will ever, together with the holy beings of all worlds.

Behold its massive walls, rising till their towering summit is hidden from our view, save that we can just discern a little of the brightness of heaven, flashing over them, as lofty clouds sometimes rise like mountains in the sky, capped with resplendent light. Built of precious stones, they are glorious to behold. And there are the gates of pearl, in magnificent proportions, opening to the city, and the streets paved with gold. The glories of God, which far outshine the lustre of the sun, illumine the place. Along the banks of the celestial river are shady groves, and flowers, and trees ladened with fruit. There is no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light.

"On all those wide-extended plains
Shines one eternal day;
There God the Son forever reigns,
And scatters night away.
No chilling winds, nor poisonous breath,
Shall reach that healthful shore;
Sickness and sorrow, pain and death,
Are felt and feared no more."

No moral defilement can enter that holy place. Not a corrupt thought is there indulged,

nor an impure desire. No oath, nor falsehood, nor slander, are ever heard in that company; nor is the bloated drunkard seen reeling, or falling in his intoxication, along that pavement. And there are no secret works of darkness and shame there perpetrated; "for without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth or maketh a lie."

But not so within. There, all are holy. Happy in God, happy in each other's society, the holy of all worlds and the redeemed of earth are there gathered.

> "O, what amazing joys they feel
> While to their golden harps they sing,
> And sit on every heavenly hill,
> And spread the triumphs of their King!"

This is the beauty of holiness; and here God dwells. Here are spread out before us the rich provision which he hath made for the happiness of the blessed.

To this glorious abode the way of peace conducts the Christian. It is here, when he reaches the golden city, that all his trials are at an end; and here, in the society of God and angels, he is to spend a happy eternity. Is it into preparation for dwelling in this blest society, that you are now striving to mould your heart? Do not faint in this endeavor, nor be discour-

aged. If you tread the path of holy obedience to God, you will discover the beauty of holiness, and know the way of peace. And the termination of this way is the everlasting rest.

Chapter Twenty-Sixth.

THE EVERLASTING REST.

THE way of peace conducts us to the everlasting rest. As the peace, springing up in a converted soul, is constantly liable to be interrupted and hindered by sin; and, as life at the best is one of trial and conflict, so are we taught that beyond this vale of tears there is a home for the weary pilgrim. It is the blissful and enduring rest, of all who walk in the way of peace, to its happy termination.

When the Christian dies, he enters on a new life, the distinguishing feature of which is, the entire separation of his spirit from the material body and material world. When the body shall have been cast into the grave, and dissolved into its original elements, the soul will then exist independently of its former connection, and come into a new and spiritual state. Not that we can now fully understand this mode of existence, or explain it. Our ideas on this subject are negative rather than positive. We know that flesh and blood cannot inherit the

kingdom of God, and that our severance from the material world will be complete. But, when we ask, how God as a spirit exists, or how angels do; or how the human soul can be separated from the body, and yet survive, we inquire into that which is infinitely beyond our comprehension, and which God has made no attempt to reveal. The fact of this separate existence we know, as we do that of electricity in the atmosphere, whose effects we see in the startling phenomena around us, though we do not comprehend, and cannot explain many curious points relative to this invisible agent. So spirit exists. The fact is developed in the operations of the mind, though, in our present state, the mode of spiritual existence is to us unfathomable.

Man, in his present organization, is unfitted for that spiritual state into which death introduces us, and is shut out from the knowledge of that world where all its inhabitants are spirits. He bears with him a body, whose organization fits him to communicate with a world of sense. He has organs adapted to his present condition; and this organization he received to fit him for the great end for which he was designed. But this is not the most perfect state of being. He rises to perfection, as he comes more nearly to resemble God, who is a pure spirit. It accords not with the purpose of Heaven for man, when

he departs to the spirit world, to take his material body with him. For though the soul be spiritually renovated through grace, yet the body, with its infirmities, temptations, and lusts, remains, and is constantly tending to sin. It would not do, in a sinless state, to have this incentive to sin ever present. For the Christian, by bitter experience, knows how often, when he has found peace in believing, this peace has been disturbed through the sinful agency of the body. On this account, while the soul is connected with the body, the Christian must remain an inhabitant of earth; because unfitted, in his present organization, to become an inhabitant of the world of spirits.

God, in his wisdom, therefore, has made provision for committing the body to the grave, to perish there, purposing to reconstruct and fashion it into a spiritual body, that it may become a fit habitation for the pure and sanctified soul in a superior state. I can never sufficiently admire the wisdom manifested in this arrangement, nor sufficiently adore God for his unspeakable grace. He not only provides for the purification of the soul by a spiritual regeneration, but for the spiritualization of the body through death and the resurrection. The body, as cast into the grave, is fleshly, and tends to corruption; and it returns, by the inevitable law of nature,

to its primitive earth. But the body reconstructed, is spiritual, no more tending to corruption, incapable of decay, and prepared to become the residence of the purified soul, in the spirit-world. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."

Here again we reach a point which to us is incomprehensible. We know what a natural body is, but we know nothing of a spiritual one. It surpasses our present power to investigate the precise character of this vehicular state. Nor is it necessary that we should. It is sufficient to know that the body is thus changed, purified through the resurrection, and fashioned into a resemblance of Christ's glorified body; that it is no longer the incentive, and instrument of sin, but is fitted to be the abode of the sanctified soul, that it may take a place among the angels, and, in unison with them, become a ministering spirit before the throne.

When the Christian enters on this perfect state, and comes into the full enjoyment of God, he is endowed with all those qualities which leave him nothing to regret, but which impart to him the highest joy. In all his powers and capacities, he is adapted to the celestial residence

he has gained, and is capable of mingling with holy beings in the duties, employments, and joys of heaven. The body, which is now changed into a spiritual one, is such a vehicle of the soul as happiness in this new state of being requires. Ample provision is thus made for the enjoyment of the blest. The Christian is thus raised, through grace, to the blessedness for which he was originally designed.

The holiness of this state distinguishes heaven from every other place. The Christian, when introduced thither, is perfectly holy. The body, purified from its corruptions by the grave, is reconstructed, and adapted to the nature of the soul, which is regenerated and sanctified through grace. Thus the Christian appears before the throne of God, pure and spotless. This sanctity is symbolized by the white robes of the saints, and is affirmed by the apostle in speaking of the New Jerusalem, when he says, that "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they that are written in the Lamb's book of life; for without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." All the representations of the sacred Scriptures agree in describing the future residence of the saints as a holy place. No tempter

will ever enter there. No sin will there ever invade the Christian's peace; and temptation and sin excluded, the heart, inclined to holiness and loving God supremely, will ever more continue in this blessedness.

Heaven is never presented to our view as a state of conflict, but one of holy rest. Having passed through his period of trial, the Christian will enter the world of holiness and bliss, never again to be subjected to the loss of his peace. Secured from falling by an almighty arm, there is no danger that he will ever apostatize. He will love and serve God in full accordance with his capacities; and he will evermore be surrounded by beings of the same character with himself. There will be no sinful propensities in his soul struggling for the mastery; no consciousness of transgression; no painful regret for past errors; nothing of this nature to interrupt and destroy his peace. All the woes incident to our fallen, sinful nature will be excluded from the heavenly rest. The fear of poverty will not disquiet the mind, nor that of want oppress; the jealousies and envies of earth will there be unknown; nor can we think of any evil to which we are here subject, from which the Christian will not there be free; and, with his holiness, his bliss will then be perfect.

The employments of heaven will be such as

to increase and perfect his joy. We reason, from the nature of the mind, and its capacity for the acquisition of knowledge, that in heaven it will still be active; that it will make the study of the works of God a chief employment, and be engaged, with the angels, in all that conduces to the divine glory, and its own happiness. Here, the body occupies a large proportion of care. But in the future state, all its wants will be provided for, so that our whole time may be actively devoted to serving God, in such rational and pleasurable pursuits, as may conduce to his glory and our good.

The ideas common on this subject are strangely wrong, contradicting everything that we know of the nature of celestial felicity and glory. It is not in idleness that the saints are to spend eternity. There must, and will be something for them to do, which will call into activity their holy and benevolent affections, or else heaven would soon become a dull place to them. Nor can we doubt that, in this respect, there is ample provision made. Heavenly happiness is represented by symbols, drawn from material objects of beauty and grandeur. We are not to suppose that heaven presents to view a beautiful garden filled with choice fruit, or a crystal stream, or a city paved with gold; nor that there are in heaven harps of gold, and

crowns, and raiment pure and white; nor that our Father has a house there, and tables spread for the hungry; for these are only emblems, and are used to convey the idea of happiness to minds otherwise incapable of its conception. We should not therefore materialize heaven, but use these scriptural metaphors to heighten our ideas of its bliss.

There will be both pleasant and useful occupation in which the saints will be engaged. It is needless, however, to speculate, where the facts have not been revealed. And yet it is pleasant to think that there are innumerable ways of occupying ourselves in heaven, so that the time will not hang heavy on our hands. There is much yet to be learned of God, and of his works. Here, we gain only the rudiments of knowledge. Even Newton, at the close of life, could say, that he appeared to himself to have been like a little boy upon the sea-shore, picking up a smoother pebble, and a prettier shell than ordinary, while the vast ocean of truth lay all unexplored before him.

When we reflect that the whole of the boundless creation will in heaven be spread out to our view, that suns and systems of worlds will rise upon the astonished vision, and that new works of creation, new forms of matter and fresh creations of mind, may occupy us with a view of

Jehovah's wisdom forever, we may feel assured that, to follow in the path which he thus opens before us, will give us enough to do, and even inspire us with fresh motives to adoration and praise.

That the body is to be reconstructed at the resurrection, to become the spiritual habitation of the soul, involves the thoughts of activity, of commingling with others in intercourse, and of holy employment suited to the perfect nature then attained. Wings are ascribed to angels, to indicate the power of swift motion; and, from all that we are told of heaven, and of the beings who dwell there, we should gather the idea that it is a place of great activity. Canaan is used as an emblem of the heavenly rest; and the Israelites looked forward to it with anticipations of there finding a peaceful home. But it was not into a state of idleness that they came, when they had crossed the Jordan; for they found that they had every thing to do, to make it such a home as they desired. They had to plant their vineyards, sow their fields, and perform all the necessary labor of the husbandman. So heaven, although figuratively described as a rest, is unquestionably a busy place. There will be employments there suited to the state of the redeemed; and these employments will conduce to their eternal happiness.

Social friendship will there be enjoyed and perpetuated. Much of the pleasure of life is that derived from social intercourse. But, in heaven, this communion will be purely spiritual. As kindred minds naturally take pleasure in each other's society, so will it be in the everlasting rest. That the saints in heaven will there recognize their friends, does not admit of a doubt. There, we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known. It greatly enhances the pleasure of anticipation to reflect, that the friendships, begun on earth, may be transferred to heaven, and there perpetuated. No thought suggested in view of friends who sleep in Jesus, is more consoling. We know that they will be happy, and that, abiding faithful, we shall join them in the kingdom of our Father. There is nothing which so effectually removes the sting of death, or imparts such consolation to the bereaved, as the thought that those we knew and loved on earth, and who have gone before us, may be deputed, by our Saviour, as ministering spirits, to convoy us home; so that, on dying, our eyes may open, in eternity, on the friends who surround our dying bed, waiting to receive, and to welcome us to glory. As we advance in life, the ties which bind us to earth grow weaker every day,

while those which attract us to heaven, become stronger and stronger.

Does the parent rejoice in the return of a wandering son? How much higher, and holier, the joy of that parent in heaven, to meet his beloved child there, well knowing that every danger is now past, and that everlasting blessedness is, through sovereign grace, secured? The spirits of our friends in heaven are as the angels of God, enjoying the same interest in each other, and ever susceptible to the same holy friendships. When it is reflected how greatly the happiness of life depends on such pleasant associations, can we doubt that the pleasures derived from this source are, in heaven, infinitely enhanced? Not only those we knew and loved on earth, but holy persons of past ages, will share our love. Beings of a higher grade will constitute part of the celestial society. The saints will mingle with the angels, partake of their knowledge, listen to their wisdom, and rejoice in their love.

But above all, the saints will there hold converse with God, and enjoy the blessedness resulting from communion, and intercourse with the Redeemer. They will feel a conscious joy in the thought, that the great and good Father, who sits upon the throne of the universe, is their friend.

What can equal such society, or confer such happiness? Friendships so exalted and glorious, formed on such a basis, and cemented by such relationships, will furnish every thing needed to make us happy. Such friendships will never create weariness nor disgust, and will never die; but they will prove a source of transcendent felicity and joy unspeakable in the souls of the redeemed.

The happiness thus created for the blest will never terminate. The saints will have found the everlasting rest. Earth presents to view no such blessedness. In comparison with this, all its pleasures are trivial; its joys are transitory; they are here to-day, and are to-morrow gone. Its friendships are often withered in an hour. All those pleasures that spring from earth bear the stamp of their earthly origin. But the rest of the saints is a state of blissful employment, and social intercourse and friendship, pure, spiritual, and eternal.

And this rest is as glorious as it is enduring. Heaven is a bright, a glorious place. It is pictured forth to view by the emblem of the golden city, adorned with precious stones, and illumined by God himself, whose glories are resplendent, and whose brightness casts the orbs of light into the shade. While the world of the lost is described as darkness, Heaven is set forth

to view in all its splendors, as a place worthy to be the residence of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Language fails to express the thoughts which cluster around that happy place, or to convey any suitable idea of that holy and blest abode. Nor can any mind but one renewed, and which knows by experience the blessedness of a life of peace, form a proper conception of the beauty and holiness of the everlasting rest.

To this rest, the way of peace conducts all who love God. This is heaven; its portals are just beyond the river of Death. He who walks in the way of peace till he reaches that river, will pass over it unharmed. He has the sure promise of God, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." And of all who have pursued this way, none have ever found God unfaithful to his promise. For it is written, for the encouragement of all that love him, that "though the mountains depart and the hills be removed, yet my kindness shall not depart from thee, nor the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."

Chapter Twenty-Seventh.

THE FAREWELL.

And now, Christian reader, whosoever thou art, into whose hands these pages may fall, consider well the evidences of thy peace with God. I have explored the heart to discover the fountain of true piety, and to set forth, in view of its characteristic emotions, such evidences of conversion as may show the false hopes of those who are deceived, and impart peace to all who truly love God. Having traversed with thee the way of peace, descended into its vales, drank of its refreshing springs, climbed its hills, and gazed on its delightful prospects, gaining even a distant view of the glorious and everlasting rest, I am now called to take my leave of thee. If thou dost find as much pleasure in reading as I have found in meditating and writing upon these sacred themes, happy wilt thou be. It is for thee that I have labored; and yet, in watering others, my own soul has been refreshed. In conducting thee along the path of peace, something of the beauty of the flowers blooming by

the way hath been left with me, and much of their fragrance. Could I impart to thee and not myself receive? Verily I have received, and am made more blessed by having sought thy blessedness.

Of the value of the instructions here given, thou must be the judge. Thou hast the law and the testimony abiding with thee. If what I have written accord not therewith, reject it. But if these be the words of life according to the testimonies of the living God, far be it from thee to cast them aside. If true religion, according to the Gospel, be not here set forth, then may God instruct the ignorant, and teach where it can be found. But if this be true religion, see thou to it and embrace it, lest thou shalt never find the way of peace.

If thou dost feel the love of God shed abroad in thy heart, go on thy way joyful in the hope which the consciousness of peace awakens. Do not experiment with thyself, to see how far thou canst go on one side and yet keep the way of peace. Go bravely on in the middle of the road, turning on neither side. For what can repay thee for the loss of thy happiness, if thou dost experiment it away? What can atone for thy folly, if thou dost sport with the pearl of great price, which it would cost thee heaven not to possess, when thou shalt stand at the celestial

gate and knock for admittance there. Never turn aside from the way of peace, but press onward till thou dost behold and enter into the rest to which it doth joyfully conduct thee.

The way of peace! Beautiful, blessed way! How pleasantly do my thoughts turn to thee! O, way leading to the New Jerusalem, the City of God; the way that the patriarchs, the prophets, and the saints of old have trodden! Way that Jesus went; and where all must go who shall have "right to the tree of life, and shall enter in through the gates into the city." I give thee joy, Christian traveller, if thou art pressing on in this way. God speed thee! Be thou faithful unto the end! Never let go thy hold on the hand of Jesus, who leads thee, and will conduct thee safely. Keep company with this heavenly friend, and he shall guide thee to the mount of God, and the city which is builded there, which is glorious to behold. Then mayest thou go on thy way singing,

"Jerusalem, my happy home,
Name ever dear to me;
When shall my labors have an end,
In joy, and peace, and thee?"

I seem to see thee, Traveller, as thou art pressing onward. I seem to feel a sympathetic joy with thine, and to catch a portion of thy

hope and courage, as I see thee manfully breasting the dangers and the trials of the Christian pilgrimage.

But yet I faint, and know not but that we must here part company; thou, to act the part of one who lives in abiding peace, and to rise and shine, as thou dost approach nearer unto glory, and dost reflect more of its brightness; and I, to stumble along as I have hitherto been wont to do, under alternate cloud and sun. Whether I shall ever be permitted to enter the blest portals, and to behold thy face in the palace of the King, still, I can rejoice to see thee enter there. I desire that thou mayest experience the blessedness of a life of peace, and pass, with the multitude of the redeemed, through the beauty of holiness, into the everlasting rest. Do not tarry for me. Go on thy way, Traveller, rejoicing in the love of God; and when thou dost gain a nearness to him in prayer, wilt thou not remember me to our Father, and ask that his grace may not forsake me, and that mercy's arms may encompass me unto the end?

And now, fare thee well! If thou art faithful, the God whom thou dost serve will deliver thee from the lions and rescue thee from the flames. Confide in him, and he will be thy refuge. Make him thy trust, and he will keep thee in

perfect peace. Be faithful unto death; "and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, thou shalt receive the Crown of Glory that fadeth not away."

M. W. DODD,

PUBLISHER AND BOOKSELLER,

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By HENRY A. ROWLAND. 12mo. Pp. 306.

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